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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[“SHE IS THERE!” HE REPLIED, POINTING TO A LONG MIRROR THAT REFLECTED MY FORM AND FACE.]

DIANA'S DIAMONDS.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN we drew up at Number 10, Upper Mowbray-street, it proved to be a very fashionable lodging-house, and as the driver rang the bell a neighbouring clock struck *one*. Not exactly an hour one would choose to present oneself among total strangers, but there was no help for it. It was a case of Hobson's choice.

After repeated rings, a sleepy half-dressed man-servant, with a candle in his hand, cautiously opened the door. He did not fling it wide open in the usual daylight style.

“It is I—Captain Halford—Stevens. You need not think that we are housebreakers. I have brought a young lady home for the night. Will you send some one to awake my aunt, and tell her that I want to see her immediately?”

Stevens' eyes (from which the sleep was banished) rolled in amazement from his mistress's nephew to me, lingered on me for a

few seconds, then rolled back again, but he said nothing.

“It's all right, Stevens! Go in and do as I tell you, and light the gas in the library whilst I settle with the cabman. Take Miss Manners indoors.”

I did not immediately follow the stupefied Stevens, but stood on the steps whilst Captain Halford placed something that chinked in the driver's horny palm, which induced him to say,—

“A hundred thanks, sir! I wish I had a fare like you every night, and wishing you and the lady luck.”

With this benediction he scrambled back to his seat, and was soon trotting away down the silent street.

The library was quickly lit up in due course, and there I remained while my companion went alone (presumably to break the news of my arrival to his aunt).

In what seemed to me a surprisingly short time he returned, bringing in his wake a tall, severe-looking elderly lady, in a grey flannel dressing-gown, with her bare feet thrust into slippers, and a little shawl over her head. She

naturally was aghast at my most unstudied and unconventional appearance, but she shook hands with me politely enough, and said,—

“My nephew tells me that he is an old acquaintance of yours, and that he was fortunate enough to extricate you from a rather awkward predicament this evening, and he also says that you have no friends in this country.”

“None except himself,” I replied, with rash gratitude.

“Most extraordinary! However, I am sure, after all you have gone through, you must be exhausted, and will be glad to go to bed; the front spare room is quite ready. If you will follow me I will show you the way at once. Stevens is bringing you a glass of wine,” she added, as Stevens—who was certainly a marvellous man to have pulled himself together so thoroughly in the middle of the night—now entered with a tray and glasses.

My room was charmingly furnished, I could see that, but I was ten times too tired to note details. I bade good-night to Mrs. Halford, who showed me where to find matches and the bell-pull; and then, with a brief good-night

she left me to myself, utterly worn out in mind and body. I lost no time in getting into bed, but ere doing up fell on my knees and offered up thanks for the merciful deliverance I had just had from the rapacity of my relatives and the clutch of my detestable cousin Joe. With what gratitude and sense of relief did I lay my head on that soft down pillow, and thank Heaven that when I awoke I would open my eyes to liberty, and possibly to happiness, though happiness and I had been seriously estranged for many days—nay, many months. With this fond hope on my mind I fell asleep.

I never once opened my eyes until the sun was shining full into the room, and I found that a neat-looking maid (oh! what a contrast to Tilda!) was drawing up the blinds, and that she had just set a cup of tea and a tempting piece of buttered toast on a small table beside me.

"Breakfast is at nine, ma'am, and, if you please, can I help you to dress, or do anything for you?"

"Nothing, thanks, only if you will kindly get me a brush and comb."

A splendid silver-mounted brush and tortoiseshell comb having been placed at my service, this neat-headed abigail withdrew, and left me to my own adornment and my own reflections.

As I lay in that luxurious bed, sipping the most delicate and fragrant of Indian tea, I said to myself, "here I have found, if even for a short time, a delightful haven of repose. To think of my being under the roof of Captain Halford's people! If they are like him they are sure to be nice!"

With this agreeable conviction before my eyes I jumped out of bed, and began to dress. I took unusual pains with my appearance, as I wished to make a good impression on Captain Halford's aunt and cousin.

I took down my too abundant hair tresses before I was satisfied, and dusted my dress carefully, pinched out my tumbled frills, and made every effort to put my best foot foremost.

After a lengthy toilette I ventured to descend and make my way to the dining-room, en route to which I met all the servants filing out from prayers, including Stevens, who eyed me critically.

Yes, prayers were over, so I was late!

I rather nervously presented myself at the breakfast table, and discovered Mrs. Halford seated before the urn, a tall young lady, presumably her daughter, reading a letter. No one else was present.

I have no doubt my disappointment was expressed in my too candid countenance.

"Good morning, Miss Manners!" said my hostess. "I hope you rested well, Selina" (to the tall girl), "this is Miss Manners, Hugh's friend. Miss Manners—my daughter."

Selina raised her eyes and looked at me, and then half closed them, as a kind of acknowledgment of our mutual introduction.

I am sorry to be obliged to confess that I took a violent dislike to Selina on the spot, and it was not difficult to read in her face that she scorned me as a miserable, harmless creature, taken in from the streets at one o'clock in the morning.

She was tall, and had a willowy figure, which was perfectly set off by a pretty cotton gown—a sharp contrast to my dowdy old garment.

She had dark eyes, like mine, very strongly marked eyebrows, a blunt nose, a freckled skin, and red hair. Nevertheless, Selina was not plain. She had a skin like satin, a beautiful long throat, good teeth, and a mass of hair—such as it was!

As I sat down Mrs. Halford said,—

"I fancy you expected to see my nephew, but he lives at the club when he is in town, and that is not very often. He runs up now and then from his regiment, which is at Portsmouth."

"I thought he was quartered in India, at Gurrumpore?"

"He was, but he exchanged into the batta-

lion at home—quite lately. India did not agree with him, which was a pity, as I suppose you know he is shockingly poor?"

"Yes, I believe so!" I murmured.

"Of course it was in India you met him?" said Selina, speaking to me for the first time, and sneering at India as if she was speaking of the Seven Dials.

"Yes, in India, as you say!"

"How long ago?"

"Nearly a year—more than a year—last May year!" I stammered, cowed by her cross-examination.

"And where did you come across each other?"

"Out in the jungle. He was with a shooting party, and they came and stayed with father and me!"

"Where? not in the jungle?" raising her brows.

"Yes; we lived forty miles from the nearest town or any other Europeans!"

"And why?" demanded Selina, who had a talent for putting questions that would have served a lawyer.

"Because father liked it!"

"And did you always live there till you came home?"

"Always!" I replied, briefly.

"Good gracious! Then I suppose you are totally uneducated—you know nothing of languages, drawing, music, or dancing? how frightful!"

"Not so bad as you fear!" I answered, rather on my mettle. "I know French, Latin and Hindostani!"

"Latin and Hindostani!" she shrieked.

"Oh! this is really too funny!"

"I am glad you think so. I also am a fair mathematician. I can sing, play the guitar, and ride!"

"Still your stock of accomplishments is small, and you will find yourself very much out of it at home. Won't she mother?"

"Oh! I don't know that! If Miss Manners sings and rides well I think she could hold her own with most!" returned Mrs. Halford, politely.

At this her daughter laughed, and said, "Miss Manners has lived all her life in an Indian jungle, by her own account, and never saw a seal but Hugh and his friends. Have you?" turning to me.

"Yes, you are quite right, Miss Halford. In many respects I have an immensity to learn!"

"So I should imagine!" she responded, as she stirred her tea, and looked at me in a peculiarly exasperating manner.

"The whole story Hugh told me last night was so hurried I could not quite understand it. Perhaps you will be so good as to tell it all to me yourself, Miss Manners!" said my hostess, sweetly.

"Certainly, to the best of my power, but I am new at talking to strangers—and—and—it is the story of my life!"

"Which we shall be very pleased to hear!"

"As long as I can remember, my father and I and two European servants lived in a solitary bungalow in the Central Provinces. He hated society. My mother died when I was a baby, and I think it was her death drove him to lead this singular life aloof from the world!"

"Very likely! And how did you like it?"

"Immensely, until latterly; and latterly I was always pining to get away, and see people and places—to see the world, in short! Father told me that I did not know when I was well off, and that I was far happier on the banks of the Kharran, among my flowers, and books, and pets, and horses, than I would be elsewhere. I did not believe him then—I do now! I did not imagine that the day would so soon come when I would give words to be back in my home in the jungle!"

"Your father is dead, is he not?"

"Yes. He died suddenly of a snake bite. By his wish I came to England to his only brother. He is my guardian. It is from him and

his son that I wish to run away and hide myself!"

"But, my dear, they are your nearest relations, and your lawful protectors!" said Mr. Halford, very gravely.

"That does not prevent them from being wicked people,—designing, false, mercenary hypocrites!"

"My goodness! What a string of words!" ejaculated Selina.

"They are all true—every one of them."

"As how?"

Uncle wants me to marry my cousin Joe, who is hideous, and who is a pauper, and altogether odious, and I won't! At first, they shut me up in a room for weeks. Then Joe and Carrie took me to London, and Joe kidnapped me to a wretched lodging-house, and kept me there. I could not escape; and only he took me to a theatre last night, and there I had the great good fortune to see Captain Halford, who helped me to get away. I was to have been married to my cousin Joe this morning."

"Really! Well, I am afraid you will have no end of trouble with these people. You see they are your legal guardians, they can fetch you from home if they like," said Selina, coolly.

"Yes; but they do not know where I am!"

"Oh! they won't be long so."

"They may find me, but I shall never go with them. I shall employ a lawyer, and tell him how they have treated me."

"Unfortunately they have the law on their side till you are of age."

"Law or not, I shall never return to them," I said, greatly ruffled by her provoking demur. "I would rather go to a gaol, or to a Hindu asylum, than ever again enter Rival's Green."

"Well, my dear, in the meantime what about your clothes?" said Mrs. Halford. "You are literally as you sit, and minus hat, gloves, and everything?"

"Yes; my costly wardrobe is at Uncle's. I only came in town, as I supposed, for the day, and my hat and other things are at Joe's lodgings."

"And your purse?"

"Yes, he took it from me. I have not a penny at present."

"Most extraordinary! Well, we must see what we can do for you," said Mrs. Halford, who was far more favourable to me than her daughter. Indeed, I believe if Selina could have had her will she would have turned me out of doors, and "done for me," in a very different fashion.

"You did not know Hugh so very well then?" she drawled, interrogatively.

"No; he was only with us for a week. Still he is a person that one gets to know soon."

"No doubt; and equally no doubt he got to know you with the same delightful celerity!"

I did not think it necessary to answer this very rude question, although it was gilded with a smile, and uttered in a would-be bantering voice.

"Hugh is a dreadful flirt!" she added.

"I am always scolding him, and telling him he will burn his fingers some day."

"And does he flirt with you?" I asked, bluntly.

Selina coloured scarlet at this home question thus brusquely put, and then said with a curl of her lip,—

"Oh dear no! We are far too great friends and understand one another much too well for any of that kind of nonsense. And, she added, "Miss Manners, let me give you a little hint in all good nature. These odd queries are not put in society. In society people don't ask questions."

I was silent! Wonderful to relate I curbed my tongue. How many very pertinent questions had she not put to me during the last half-hour?

"Now, Selina, ring the bell!" said her mother. "I have heaps to do this morning, and I must manage a little shopping for Miss Manners, and Hugh will be here almost im-

mediately. So have the things removed, and let us go upstairs."

"Is Hugh coming early?" she said, rising with alacrity. "I had no idea. Why did you not say so before, mother?" as Selina pulled the bell.

I noticed that she gave herself a long, long look in the glass, and patted her hair carefully with her left hand. Then she turned about, and, as it were, mentally compared her face and mine. I was as confident that she did so as if I had been inside her thoughts; and I read in that sharp critical glance two things, one of which I had known already, the other I had not known, but I knew it now! In me she fancied she saw a possible rival in the affections of her cousin Hugh Halford.

CHAPTER XX.

CAPTAIN HALFORD arrived most punctually, and was, after a short delay with his cousin on the stairs, closeted with his aunt for fully half-an-hour in the library.

Whilst Mrs. Halford went to put on her bonnet to sally forth on my behalf, he contrived to have a few moments' conversation with me.

"I expect your cousin and your uncle are careering over London, *ventre à terre*, looking for you!" was one of his first remarks.

"Yes," I returned; "and your cousin Selina seems to think that they are bound to find me and carry me off, and that they are my proper and lawful protectors. I do not care for your cousin, and I tell you so frankly."

"Oh! you must not mind her manner; it is brusque and peculiar. She goes in for speaking her mind rather freely, but her heart is in the right place!"

"Meaning that it is in your keeping," I exclaimed, with would-be railery.

"No, meaning nothing of the kind," he answered, rather shortly. "I am sure she will be your friend; only don't be too sensitive, and don't mind her sharp speeches. She thinks them clever!"

"And I think them spiteful!"

"Oh! I say. No, she is not that. When she is down on me I laugh in her face. Her speeches, as far as I am concerned, run like water off a duck's back. You and she will find that you improve on acquaintance."

"Then she has been talking about me to you already? We have both made you our confidante?"

"Never mind; you could not have a safer one. I am going to read your father's will, and get a copy of it at Doctors' Commons. That will show us exactly how you stand. I shall place your affairs in the hands of a good sharp solicitor, and leave him to fight your uncle. I—all in your name—will make him threaten legal proceedings against your cousin Joe for abducting you against your will, and will make him apply to your uncle to refund or account for your money that he has presumably drawn and spent. Mr. Knott will do great things, and I must take you to see him to-morrow when you have got a new rig-out!"

"You are more than kind, and I am ashamed of all the trouble I am giving you; but you know very well that I have no friend but yourself and Peggy—and Peggy, though clever enough in her way, knows nothing of business. Whenever I get a hat I should like to go and see her. Indeed, perhaps it would be better that I should remain with her."

"Not at all. Go and see her, by all means; but you are far better in my aunt's house than living with Peggy and her class."

"But I have no claim whatever on your aunt."

"Yes, you have, in being my—my—" he seemed rather at a loss for a word, and then said "protégée."

"I have one thing—one request to make, Captain Halford, and I hope you will grant it."

"Anything, everything, to the half of my kingdom!"

"It is this. I have suffered so much and been so dreadfully persecuted on account of my money that I have a horror of anyone knowing anything about it. Please—please, keep the fact of my heiress-ship to yourself."

"But why? You will find your reception in the world much more agreeable and flattering as an heiress than otherwise! Take my advice, and do not hide your gold under a bushel!"

"Captain Halford, I cannot take your advice, for you are not (excuse me) capable of giving it on this matter. You have never known what it is to be rich, and to be hunted and persecuted, and half starved, and threatened, and locked up, all because you had money! Please, please let me have my own way. Say I have one hundred pounds a-year, if that, and say no more. I would like to try and see if I have any other recommendations than riches, and if people could be brought to care for me for myself alone. Do you think they could?" I inquired, rather anxiously.

"I am certain of it!" he answered, impressively.

"Then let me take my chance, and try and go back, in one way, to former days, when I knew nothing of money or money's cares, and had no more thought of heiress-ship than one of the fish in the Kharraan."

"Talking of cares, may I ask what you are going to do with your most remarkable necklace?"

"I shall keep it. At present it is still in my pocket, tied up in a handkerchief."

"What would Storrs and Mortimer, or Hunt and Roskell say if they heard of such degrading treatment of such priceless gems! Fifteen thousand pounds' worth stuffed into a lady's pocket?"

"I shall get a box for them, and lock them up—that is, when I have any money. What am I to do if uncle declines to let me touch a penny until I am of age?"

"Oh! I think Mr. Knott will make him see the matter reasonably. However, much depends on your father's will."

Here the door opened, and Miss Halford came into the room, very becomingly dressed for walking, and her presence of course put an end to our conversation.

"I shall see you to-morrow," said my protector, "and I shall call for you about twelve, and take you to Mr. Knott's."

"Oh! I'm sure that would not do at all," said Selina. "Fancy you and Hugh driving about town together!"

"We have ridden and boated and gone tiger-shooting together, and come to no harm. What is likely to happen if we venture across London in a hansom cab, or—even if you are so nervous—a four-wheeler?"

"You know my meaning perfectly well, Hugh. I am not thinking of that kind of danger."

"Oh! then I am not aware of any other; but in case Miss Manners's outdoor paraphernalia may not be ready, I shall try and bring the mountain to Mahomet, and see if I can induce Mr. Knott to call here about twelve o'clock to-morrow."

"Why are you in such a hurry?"

"Because after to-morrow I must go back to duty; as it is, I have put in for an extra two days!"

"Bother your duty! Will you not be here for our dinner on the fourth, and our dance on the fifteenth?"

"The dinner—no! The dance—if possible! Permit me to bespeak two waltzes?"

"If you are not late," she answered, carelessly. "You know I won't keep my programme empty for anyone," but I could tell by instinct that whoever went to the wall as regarded dances, he would not, and that his request had pleased her.

Presently Mrs. Halford arrived, equipped with purse and hand-bag, and took the measure of my head—the size of my hands.

"For a jacket! I fancy something that

will suit Selina will suit you," she remarked, as she cast her eyes over my figure.

"Oh, dear, no, mamma," broke in Selina, irritably. "Where are your eyes? Her shoulders and waist are twice the size of mine!" and she put her hands on her hips and twirled herself round as if to show off what was quite needless, for anyone could see that she had a very pretty figure.

All the same, mine was not to be despised. My shoulders and waist were no wider than her own, but I was young, and perhaps a trifle awkward, and I had not the advantage, like her, of a French *corsetière*, and a first-class dressmaker, and these things to make a considerable difference.

After this I was left alone, Mrs. Halford assuring me, as she departed, "That she would take a shot at my figure, and risk bringing me home some kind of outdoor jacket."

When they were gone I was free to roam about the drawing-room—the first really pretty room that I had ever seen. I examined pictures, dainty nick-nacks, china, photos, flowers in stands, and plush-framed mirrors, all with the deepest interest.

What a contrast this room was with its scent of roses and musk, rose-coloured blinds, velvet lounges, lace and silken curtains and Persian carpets, to our bare best room on the banks of the Kharraan, with one or two cold marble-tipped tables, a couple of Bombay sofas, a few cane arm-chairs—no blinds, no photographs, no mirrors, no piano!

There were three or four portraits of Captain Halford in uniform, in cricket clothes, in mufti, and one in fancy dress, and, curious to relate, his photograph and Selina's were invariably paired off together, in similar frames. This, even to my innocent and inexperienced eye, was a painfully significant fact.

The troubles I had come through—the terrors of the last two months, had driven my folly—for folly it was, I assured myself, the proper word for it—clean out of my head. It was as a friend, and not as anything that bore the faintest resemblance to a lover, that I looked upon Hugh Halford. Then I asked myself fiercely,—

Why did it cost me such an unexpected pang to see his picture so conspicuously side by side with Selina's?

I could not answer this question, but one thing I was certain of—that I could better endure to see him the *fiancé* of any one rather than his cousin, Miss Halford; besides which, I added to myself, first cousins should never marry!

Mrs. Halford's exertions on my behalf were successful. A pretty hat and jacket, and the best of six-button gloves were handed over to me, and in the afternoon I was permitted to go forth under the care of Mrs. Halford's own maid to call on Peggy.

Peggy I found in the snug back-parlour of a small, but decent shop; and to say that she was overjoyed to see me is but putting the case very feebly. One would almost imagine that I had been dead and had come to life again from the way in which she wept over me and embraced me; and Tony, who soon joined the circle, nearly wrung my arm off, so great was his delight.

Then, of course, I had to sit down and relate all my adventures, and you may be sure that I did not spare Joe in my recital, nor that false, perfidious Tilda, who had taken my watch and betrayed me—for, of course, Peggy had never received my letter, and was in a desperate state of mind, which my appearance had delightfully relieved.

She was astonished to hear of my good luck in being rescued by Captain Halford, and seemed highly to approve of my living under his aunt's roof.

I noticed that she bestowed a *wink* on Tony as she warmly applauded my present quarters; but I explained my dread of uncle's power, of Joe's persecution, of a lack of money, and of my wearing out my welcome.

"If the old sinner" (meaning my Uncle

Isaac) "makes any ructions, you leave him to me and Peggy. Clark will appear against him in court, and tell how he persecuted his orphan niece for the sake of lucre; how he shut her up, and set on his rascal of a son to run off with her and her fortune. Oh, I'll shame him! As to wearing out your welcome, which I doubt if you ever could do, what ails you then but to come here? Sure, and is not every penny we have—and thanks to your good father, we have a good show of them—and every bite and sup is yours as much as ours? Won't we be but too proud to have you; only it's fitter, darling, you should live with rale quality than humble people like us."

"Is it? Well, I lived with you for many years, Peg, and father's word has come true. Many and many a time have I looked back with regret to our old house on the banks of the Kharran."

"Ah, well, you will soon grow out of that. Wait till you are married, and have a fine house of your own, and a carriage and horses, and go to balls and parties, and see the highest in the land, and the world you were always so set upon!"

"From what I have seen of the world I don't like it at all. I think it is a dreadfully false, selfish place."

"Oh, you might go farther and fare worse; people is not all bad. It would be hard to fight on such another pair of blackguards as the old man and Mr. Joe—there's not their equal anywhere."

"Are you going to live here, Peg? I asked, presently."

"No, Tony has bought a nice little cottage down in Kent, near his native village—quite a genteel place, with four rooms, a kitchen, and wash-house, a porch, and gas, and an elegant garden. We are just picking up a few sticks of furniture, and then we will flit, maybe next month."

"Well, Peg, I'll come and see you again soon; but I must go now, as Mary Ann, the maid, is waiting for me in the cab all this time."

"Oh! Now to think of that! Can't we call her in? I was looking to give you some tea and one of my own hot cakes. I won't be more than fifteen minutes, and you shall have it hot off the griddle, just as you like it."

"I really could not stop now, Peg, for we dine at half-past seven, and Mary Anne has to dress her mistress."

"Well, well, Tony's brother and wife must see you. [Just wait for that, at any rate, honey!"]

"Nancy and Tom," she shrieked, "here's mee own child. Come and take a look at her, for she is just going."

On this invitation Tony's brother and wife immediately came in, and stared and grinned and shook hands with me. His wife, like Peggy, was Irish, and being frankly asked to state her opinion of me and my face, said, as she smoothed her apron and stared at me as if I was a picture or some inanimate object,—

"Faith, Peggy, I think she is just a tee-totally beautiful young lady, and is would be no harm if there was twins of her. Her hair is like barley sugar for colour, and her face is like one of those on the boxes of best French plums," returned Nancy Clark, giving Diana one of her smiles from the stock in the shop.

"Arrah! I get out with your barley sugar and French plums, and don't be talking nonsense. Never mind her, agra, she has all her mind tied up in the stock. And now must you really be going? Well, well, you have been a sight for sore eyes, and I won't keep you. So good-bye and good luck!"

And then she escorted me out and packed me into the cab with patient Mary Ann, who said to me as we drove home,—

"As I was waiting for you, miss, such a queer thing happened. Two men were watching the house for near an hour. A kind of gentleman one was—"

"Had he a red face?" I asked anxiously.

"Yes, and he came over and talked and

asked me who I was waiting for, and made himself very pleasant and free!"

"And what did you say?" I asked.

"Oh! I am no fool, miss, and I heard as you had some folks hunting after you; so I said to him quite confidential like that I was waiting on my young man, who was foreman in a batter's four doors down, but I dare not drive any nearer, for fear he would get chaffed; and that, when the shutters were up, and business done, he and I was going to tea with my mother, and afterwards to a circus over in Battersea side."

"Oh, Mary Ann, how clever of you! But how could you tell so many fibs—all made up on the spur of the moment, all so pat—just like the truth?"

"What else was I to do, miss? Would you have had me inform him that I was waiting for Miss Manners, who was inside, seeing her old nurse, and more, by token, she had her diamonds in her pocket?"

"Oh, Mary Ann, how do you know anything about them?" I cried, very much startled.

"Why, miss, you know you gave me your dress to brush—that is, the skirt only—and I took it out on the landing; and I, as I always do, turned out the pocket. I never did see anything like those stones—never!"

"And never say anything about them. They are so valuable. They are a kind of millstone round my neck. They make me wretched. Please never tell anyone what you discovered; it would not be safe."

"Very well, miss."

"And I am greatly indebted to you for putting my cousin off the scent. If you had not had your wits about you I do not know what would have happened to me. Did he believe you, really?"

"Oh, really and truly, miss. If he had not do you think he would have gone away?"

This was unanswerable. From what I knew of Joe, had he suspected my affinity, it was the very last thing that he would have done!

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. KNOTT condescended to accompany Captain Halford. I had a long interview with them both in Mrs. Halford's library. My uncle was my duly-appointed guardian until I came of age at one-and-twenty, and the interest of my money went through his hands; the principal was so strictly tied up that even I myself had no power to touch it—it was settled on me and my heirs as tightly as law could bind it.

Mr. Knott asked me many questions about my life at Rivals' Green, and my sojourn in London. He assured me that he would do his best for me, but he foresaw a very tough and disagreeable job with my uncle; and he thought that I had small chance of getting a half-penny of my money if I lived away from him, and out of his authority, as long as I was a minor.

"Of course, when you attain your majority you can do as you please, and will be your own mistress," he remarked, with professional gravity.

"Yes, I know this."

But I assured him that this was but cold comfort to me. I was still two years and some months short of that desired epoch, and what was to become of me in the meantime—homeless, penniless, and friendless?

"I suppose," said Mr. Knott, "if I opened friendly negotiations you would, perhaps, consider the propriety of going back? Of course I shall keep my eye on you!"

No; I'll never go back. Not if you had the eyes of Argus, and everyone of them were centered on me, it would not be of the least use. They would not let me escape from their clutches a second time," I replied, with an air of resolute conviction.

"The fact is, Mr. Knott," said Captain Halford, "you must take a high hand with

Mr. Manners. The first blow is half the battle, and you need not have any delicacy, but strike hard. Tell him he will never have his ward in his power again. I would be sorry to leave a dog in his care! Tell him most distinctly that unless he makes his niece a suitable allowance she will proceed against him for ill-usage and false imprisonment, and anything else you can think of to frighten him. No private interviews will be granted; no private letters opened. All communications must be made to you, Mr. Knott, and you will have to bear the brunt of the battle."

This was a way of settling the matter after my own heart, and I inwardly thanked my champion for his bold words, and hoped Mr. Knott would follow them with bold deeds.

"Who is to fight behind me—Miss Manners herself?"

"No; I will fight him, although I am no blood-relation to your client. In fact, my name need not appear, Mr. Knott, as it will be more prudent for me to keep in the background; but I will back you up through thick and thin, and you can look to me for the sinews of war."

"Meaning for money!" I interrupted. "Oh, no! Captain Halford, that could not be. Could I not borrow money as I have heard of people doing? Could I not—though it sounds odd of me to suggest it—go to the Jews as young men do?"

"No, most emphatically; that would be madness. Besides, you cannot touch a penny of your principal; but I'll tell you what you could do. You might raise some money on your diamonds!" said Captain Halford.

"And part with them? Oh, never! I never will do that, not even if I was starving."

This suggestion was as distasteful to me as mine had been to him. I would not have minded raising money even at fifty per cent. to fight my guardian and reclaim my own income and liberty; but to pawn my diamonds struck me as an unfathomable depth of degradation.

After a long interview, which I rose from with an aching head and flushed face, it was decided that Mr. Knott was to have what Captain Halford called "a free hand," and to do his best to make uncle disgorge at least a small portion of my yearly interest.

After this a terrific paper battle raged between Mr. Knott's chambers and Rivals' Green. Direful threats were used on both sides; a very heated personal interview took place between my lawyer and uncle, and Joe. They at first acted the dignified and injured part—then the imperious; finally they showed up in their true colours.

Mr. Knott stood to his guns, and fought for me valiantly. When they stormed, and swore, and blustered, and talked of the Lord Chancellor, and their legal custody of me, he was mild, but firm; asked for an account of my last year's income, spoke of abduction, personal restraint, a family confederacy against an unprotected girl, whose money was a temptation to folks on the verge of bankruptcy. He discoursed eloquently of public exposure, of certain wealthy and staunch friends at my call, and of a trial in which uncle and Joe would figure as defendants in a criminal case. He talked to the purpose; he cowed them completely; and, in the end, after a desperate battle, prolonged over a month, he wrung an allowance of a hundred a year for me, to be paid through him, and a written agreement that neither uncle, Joe, or Carrie, would attempt to see me, or molest me in any way whatever for the future.

"My strong card," said Mr. Knott, as he afterwards recounted his triumphs, "was the old nurse. She was in the house, and she would have been, as they well knew, a most formidable witness and an awkward customer. On the whole, and all things considered, my dear Miss Manners, you have got out of the business well. You are rid of them, and you have enough to scrape along with till you come of age, and that will soon run round."

"Yes, and I have to thank you most sincerely for all you have accomplished, but I only wish I could feel as confident as you do about my uncle and Joe not interfering with me and my affairs. I have a very strong presentiment that I have by no means seen the last of them yet!"

At this presentiment Mr. Knott laughed.

Of course I still stayed on at Upper Mowbray-street, whilst these negotiations were being exchanged, and experienced hot and cold fits by turns, as letters, furious and fiery, were dispatched to me by uncle, under cover to my lawyer.

When I received one of these billets I had a cold fit of terror; when it was answered by Mr. Knott I had a warm glow of relief.

Mr. Knott advanced me some money, at his own risk, for my necessary expenses. I wanted clothes and pocket-money, and I could not ask my hostess for either.

She was putting me too deeply in her debt as it was, giving me—me, a complete stranger—protection and house-room.

I liked Mrs. Halford very much, but I was, frankly speaking, not partial to Selina.

Latterly she had been more civil to me—perhaps because she believed that my affairs were being arranged by Mr. Knott with a view to my seeking another home. From the bottom of her heart she could "speed the parting guest."

Meanwhile that guest effaced herself as much as possible, especially when Captain Halford was in town on a day or two's leave from his regiment.

I always took these opportunities of giving Peggy the pleasure of my society from early morn till dewy eve, which arrangement found great favour, not only in her sight, but in Selina's, who began to thaw in her manner, to give me useful hints about dress, to invite me out on shopping excursions, and to take me to morning concerts and exhibitions of paintings when her mother was not inclined to play the chaperone.

The dance she had alluded to had come off, and I had helped to prepare for it, and worked hard all day at the decorations; but when the final touches were put, and Selina and her mother went upstairs to dress, I went up to undress and go to bed! I was not going to appear at any gaiety within six months after my father's death. My own feeling was against it, putting custom aside, and Selina need not have been alarmed, and her caution as to mourning etiquette was quite uncalled for.

"I am really sorry you won't see how it all goes off," she had remarked carelessly; "but, of course, in your deep mourning, and your father only six months dead, you could not think of appearing, could you?"

"Of course not. I never dreamt of such a thing," was my prompt answer, and I could tell by the expression of her face that she was immensely relieved.

The music, voices, dancing, and general hubbub incident to a ball kept me awake until the very last carriage had driven away, and morning light crept in between the chinks of the shutters. All night long, as I lay and tossed from side to side, and heard the sound of merry steps and merry fiddlers, and laughter and men's voices had been wafted even to my upper regions, I had been consumed by two conflicting emotions. One—a wicked one, I felt guiltily aware—a desire to be prettily-dressed, to wear my diamonds, to go down stairs and laugh and dance and enjoy myself like the crowd of other girls, and also to—(but this I dare hardly whisper to myself)—see Captain Halford. Alas! alas. Was that old madness, for it was nothing else, coming back? I had not met him for days.

Why, I asked myself, should I not taste of the pleasures of youth like other girls? Youth was the time to be gay and happy. Impelled by some inward force, I actually got up and lit the gas, partly dressed myself, then twisted up my hair in the most fashionable style, unearthened my precious diamonds, and fastened

them round my bare white neck, and then sat for fully a quarter of an hour, and feasted my eyes on my reflection in the glass!

After this foolish performance, cruel reason sternly resumed her sway. I pulled down my hair, removed my necklace, huddled off my clothes, and crept back into bed, feeling humbled indeed, under the stinging lash of my own conscience—and she had a heavy arm, and did not spare me.

How vain and wicked and immodest I was, sitting staring at my own face, and wishing to display myself and my diamonds below stairs, when but six months ago I had lost, I might say, my only relative in the world—one who was father, mother, brother, and sister; and I had already forgotten him so far as to be now longing to go to a dance—not that I could dance a step, but just to show myself, especially to a man who did not particularly want to see me, and who was another girl's sweetheart!

My cheeks burnt like fire as my inward monitor administered these cutting truths. Captain Halford had never made love to me—no—never—either in London or the jungle. That song he sung was simply a society ditty, and meant nothing. It would be a pretty thing if every girl imagined that there was a hidden and sentimental meaning in every song a man sung! I had never heard a song before in those days, and my folly and ignorance and conceit, were all well matched. And how the tune and those lines had haunted me:—

"Tell me once more, I can be true, can you?
It all depends—it all depends."

I could depend upon one thing for certain, and that was, that he never gave me a thought excepting as a girl, whom by a rather romantic meeting in India, and another romantic meeting in London, had acquired his acquaintance—nay, his friendship, his protection, and his pity—that was all; and she, like a susceptible goose, had rewarded him by falling in love with him, imagining that she had fallen in love.

Well, whatever happened, he should never know. Little pride as I seemed to have in private life, I still had a sufficient stock to carry me bravely under the public eye.

Captain Halford had been very good to me. No brother could have done more. He had rescued me from my odious relatives and placed me with his own, where I had every luxury, and the society of gentlemen and the most refined surroundings. In return for this was I to enact the part of a snake in the grass, and try and thrust myself between him and his cousin?

"Perhaps he does not care a straw for her," suggested a rebellious thought. "He hinted as much."

"But what man ever avows his love for one girl to another?" returned common sense. "Probably, if he were going to be married to her next week, he would laugh it off to you this very day. They all do that, and he is no exception to the rule."

Apparently he was not. Next morning, as Selina and I went round among the debris of the feast and noted the withered flowers, the fading plants, the nooks and corners on stairs and landings that last night had made such tempting bowers, now looking tawdry and in the daylight, she remarked, with a laugh and a kind of conscious look,—

"That little arbour in the conservatory was a great success. It was never empty. I, myself, sat out three dances there—with Hugh!"

I coloured involuntarily, and then plucked up courage to ask the crucial question. As I asked it my heart beat fast.

"Are you going to be married to him?"

"It is easily known that you have been brought up in the wilds. You ask such odd, brusque questions."

"I am afraid I do. If I were a girl brought up—as you have been—I would fence round the edge and gain the gist of the matter by easy stages, but I don't know how to do that.

I am just like a savage, and when I want to know a thing I ask straight out, without any beating about the bush—and you have not answered my question yet?" I replied.

"What question? Oh, yes, about Hugh!" smiling to herself. "Well, we are not engaged, but I fancy we shall be married some day. It is not to be thought of at present—not even whispered as yet."

"Why?"

"There you go with your questions again. Why, because Hugh can barely keep himself, much less a wife. Hugh is disgustingly poor, and he has no expectations."

"And you? Surely you are not disgustingly poor?"

"Oh, I am not well off. My mother's income goes to my brother. I shall only have a few paltry thousands. I loathe and abhor poverty—cheap gentility, two servants, cold mutton, a fourth-rate dressmaker, and second-class society. I think sometimes I would rather die than come to that. Fancy being a dowdy officer's wife, living in lodgings in some wretched little garrison town—say in Ireland!"

"But you have not said a word about the reverse of the shield?"

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean your cousin Hugh, of course."

"Oh, yes! Hugh is a charming fellow, always so well bred, so well dressed, and so very good-looking. I am certainly very fond of Hugh, and I can do whatever I please with him—turn him round my little finger."

"Can you? I am surprised! I should not have thought he was that sort of man," I remarked very gravely.

"Oh, of course you know very little about him, and you don't know men at all. They are easily managed when you know how to set about it!"

"I do not think you would find it easy to manage uncle or Joe," I returned, with conviction.

"I should not attempt to try. They are wretches. I am speaking of gentlemen. Yes, I am very fond of Hugh. I've known him all my life. However, do not say anything about what I have been telling you to a soul. He would not wish it known. Some day I suppose I must make up my mind and take the plunge, but it won't be this year."

"Plunge?" I echoed.

"Yes, into poverty and matrimony, you matter-of-course girl."

After this confidence, I had now no excuse for what I called my "folly;" it was well I had had my eyes opened to the truth, and had no longer the smallest pretext for wasting my thoughts on unprofitable day-dreams.

Our actual business transaction having been accomplished, I had really no reason for meeting Captain Halford, and whenever I heard that he was coming up to town for the day, and proposed lunching in Mowbray-street, I invariably found that I had promised to spend that day with Peggy.

This happened three or four times without any remark being made by either Selina or her mother, and if Captain Halford took any notice of my absence his inquiries never reached my ears.

One evening, about nine o'clock, I was sitting alone in the drawing-room in the dusk. The evening was warm, and I lay back in an easy chair beside an open window inhaling the perfume from a large box of mignonette which stood outside upon the sill.

Selina and Mrs. Halford had gone to Sandown races, and were driving back from the course with some smart friends. I did not expect them till between nine and ten o'clock, and meantime I was monarch of all I surveyed. I was rather surprised to hear them drive up much earlier than the hour named, and more surprised still when the drawing-room door opened, and in walked Captain Halford alone.

"Ah!" he said, as he shook hands, "you did not expect to see me, and you have not had time to get out of the way. Tell me, what

have I done that you now always deliberately avoid me?"

"What do you mean? How do you know?" I stammered.

"I mean what I say, and you know what I mean."

"I—I generally go pretty often to Peggy's."

"And you invariably go to see her when I am in town. Why is this?"

Silence on my part, and a microscopic survey of the carpet.

"I see you will not tell me in what have I offended!"

"In no way! But what has brought you here, and to-night? Were you not up on Monday?"

"I was. I come up now to say good-bye. We got our orders for Egypt this morning, and we sail on Saturday."

"And this is Wednesday!" I gasped.

"As you very truly say, this is Wednesday—Wednesday night. We have just forty-eight hours to get our kit together. We leave Spithead at dawn on the twenty-second."

For a moment I could not think of anything to say, and then I stammered out,—

"Your cousin will—will be sorry?"

"Why?" he asked, with startling brevity.

"Because you are, I suppose, going with that new expedition up the Nile to fight the Arabs in the deserts, and to meet many dangers, and you may never come back."

"That is true. Yes, I daresay Selina will be sorry—for a week. Will anyone else be sorry?"

"Why, of course," endeavouring to steady my voice. "Your aunt and all your friends."

"And among them you. Will you be sorry if I never return?" he asked, looking at me earnestly.

"Need you ask?" I returned, in a broken voice. "What an ungrateful wretch you must think me!"

"I was not thinking of gratitude at present."

"No, and never mind me at all. Think of yourself; you have so much to occupy your mind. Every moment is precious. Are you going to stay in London to-night? You must, to see her. You could not leave without bidding her good-bye!" I added tremulously.

"What do you mean?" he inquired, turning on me sharply.

"I mean your cousin Selina. She went to Sandown races this afternoon. She and Mrs. Halford may be back any minute. You will surely wait, won't you?"

"You are evidently labouring under some monstrous mistake. My cousin Selina is my cousin and playmate, no more. I have seen her, as you call it, and, to my grief, I am about to bid her good-bye. Now?"

"Where—who is she?" I asked eagerly.

"Do I know her?"

"She is there," he replied, pointing to a long mirror that stood between the windows, and that reflected my black-robed form and anxious white face.

"Diana," he said, grasping both my hands in his, "I must speak now, or it may be never. Of course you know that it is yourself. It has always been you. Yes, ever since the day I first saw you, in the old palace, in what now seems as if it had been another existence. But until now I have never dared to speak, and my lips would have been sealed only for this sudden move. And I feel that I must tell you what perhaps you have already guessed—I love you!"

To this I made no answer. I looked not at him, but upon the ground. My hands, that he still held, trembled exceedingly, and I was madly happy, and, at the same time, desperately miserable. Was I only to be blessed with a mere mirage of bliss? Within an hour he would be gone.

"Diana, do you, can you, care for me? I feel that I am asking too much. But even if you do not in the way I mean, it will make no difference in my feelings. You have seen nothing of the world. You are a child in many ways—a mere baby. You have not

had time to compare me with others; you cannot know your own mind. Still I think it right that you should know what no one else should know, that if I never come back, and lie in a nameless grave, in the desert, you can say to yourself when you think of me—if you ever do—he loved me—I was his first love, and his last."

"I—I do care for you very much," I faltered, with tears rolling down my cheeks. "I have no one in the world but you and Peggy."

"Yes, you care for me. Just as I expected, because I knew your father; I am connected with your home, because I luckily delivered you from your cousin and uncle, and because I am almost the only man you know. You look at me from a certain point of view that has a touch of interest, an interest connected with other things, and another person. But you do not love me. And, indeed, honestly, I did not dare to expect it. Some day you will know what love is. What you feel now is gratitude and affection—nothing more."

"Do not talk to me like that, and make me more miserable than I am," I burst out, passionately; "and do not tempt me to say what—what—I may be sorry for, and ashamed of when you are miles away. I—I—do love you," I sobbed, "since you force me to say it, and you have made me very happy, only to make me miserable by going away, but you will return. You must, you shall return! If you don't I shall die!" Having made this announcement I sobbed still more.

"I feel as if I was a base, dishonourable wretch," he said, to my great surprise. "You are an heiress, and I am an almost penniless captain in a marching regiment. I never meant to speak only for this. Once or twice the words trembled on my lips when you and I rode together on the plains near the Kharran, but I felt that I had no right to take advantage of your youth and inexperience, especially as I was told by Mr. Hinkson that you were a very rich prize, and that your father would only give your hand to a rich man."

"Which was the reason that he asked for my hand himself!" I exclaimed, scornfully; "and a lean purse did not deter his nephew from leaving his heart at my feet!"

"Ah! I suspected Jack, that evening you went across the river. So you have had three proposals—one from every man you have spoken to so far!"

"Only because I am rich. No, no, no! I don't mean you!" I cried, correcting myself, incoherently.

"You may excuse me. Other people will say I am a fortune-hunter, and that I married you for your rupees and diamonds. I could not stand that. I could not bear to live on my wife's money. As far as I am concerned I wish you had not a farthing! It is your money that has been my stumbling-block."

"And then how could we live, since you say you are penniless?"

"Oh! penniless is a figure of speech. I have three hundred a-year besides my pay. Your tastes are as simple as yourself, except—I was nearly forgetting your horses—I never could afford you a three thousand rupee Arab!"

"I could live without it very well. I—I—shall give you all my money, and be thankful to be rid of it."

"You cannot do that; and, remember, that you are not bound to me in any way, Diana."

"What! not when—"

"Not when I love you as I do," he interrupted. "No, not even then. I am bound to you, but you are at liberty. I shall not even write to you when I am away."

"You must, you must! How can you talk so? How cruel you are, Hugh! You call this love; I call it pride. Why should I not—why may I not consider myself engaged to you? I am, I will be in spite of you!"

"Because you are a child, as I tell you. You have never seen anything of the world; you are ten years younger than I am. I am not going to take advantage of your youth and innocence. You may see someone you will like far better,

some more suitable match, and then you are at liberty to forget me, but I love you. I know my own heart, and I am yours for ever!"

"But I may not know my own mind! You treat me as a child—and I am eighteen!"

"I treat you as a child, for you are but one. The day may come when you will be grateful for the remembrance of this hour, and thankful that I exacted no binding pledge. Nay, I have not asked you for what is a lover's privilege—a kiss. Should we never meet again, should you marry another, you will be free to say, Hugh Halford loved me in spite of himself, and in spite of my riches loved me better than his own soul, but he never laid his lips on mine!"

(To be continued.)

A TRUE REVENGE.

—30—

CHAPTER VIII.

THE corn in the fields round about Sir Arthur Raye's estate stood brightly golden in the warm sunlight, waiting with bowed head for the gleaming sickle to cut short its beautiful life. The fair, sweet month of August, so dear to one of our favourite authors, had drawn slowly and lingeringly to a close, and the harvest was being gathered in with all speed, for a wet autumn was expected.

Some of the balmy warmth of the dead month still hung in the air, and the fading flowers sent up a cloud of perfume into the breeze, seeming to gather the whole strength of their flower-souls for this one tribute to the sweet Mother Nature who had given them birth.

Gently and calmly the river rippled along between the hills, rising so roundly against the deep blueness of the sky, and the brook that had babbled such words of hope to Gabriel Varne a few months back, bounded joyously and with renewed strength, after a few welcome showers, down its rugged, root-tangled bed, moving slowly over the white and red pebbles, half hidden 'midst soft white sand that lay at the foot of the hill.

Up at Wood Lodge the windows were all thrown wide open, and lying on a couch, where the soft melody of the birds came distinctly to her, was Ianthe Raye.

The fair sweet angel face had grown graver than before, the large violet eyes wore a look of calm serene thought, and the long golden tresses, falling like a veil of sunlight round her, formed an aureole about the calm purity of the girl's features.

Her eyes were fixed upon the hills, where the small white clouds cast down their green-shaded shadows, and where down in the hollows the cattle grazed.

She could see the fields of corn waving in the breeze, and the bright poppies nodded their scarlet heads to her as they met the gaze of those pure eyes.

Una was sitting beside her, indolently turning over the pages of a book, a look of deep discontent—that formed a striking though not pleasing contrast to the quiet of the other face—resting on her beautiful countenance.

"Hush! Listen!" said Ianthe, putting her finger to her lips to preserve silence.

"What is it, Ianthe?" exclaimed Una, impatiently.

"Does not the wind seem to speak as it rushes so softly yet swiftly through the trees? They speak to me, Una, those dancing, merry leaves, and tell me of other lands. The wind brings many tales of wonder to them, and then they whisper them to me, for they know I love to listen."

"I think you are absurdly childish, Ianthe. I believe you fancy it is interesting to talk so, but, believe me, if you air those ideas to strangers you will get set down as a rhapsodi-

zing school-girl," was her cousin's unsympathetic reply.

The rustle of the green leaves, the merry chirp, chirp of the birds, had no music in their sounds for her, whose soul was set on the perishable things of the earth, and not on the poetical beauties of nature.

There was no beauty to her beyond the mere beauty of possession in those wide-stretching emerald fields, with the patches of golden corn brightening the landscape.

She never cared to watch the glow of sunset rise up behind those deep green hills, spreading its bright crimson rays far over the sky, till the whole stretch of land was bathed in crimson and golden light.

Una was of the world, worldly, and loved only the excitement and whirl of fashionable society.

The calm quiet of country life palled upon her when there was no one to flirt with, and Lord Graydon had been away from home some time.

Gabriel, too, had only written a few short unsatisfactory letters, inquiring after his darling's health and breathing of love, but containing absolutely no tidings of his own doings, not even an allusion as to where he was staying and with whom, and this piqued the girl, ready to find fault on the smallest provocation.

Did he think she was a doll like Ianthe, to be petted and caressed, but never to be consulted on any serious subject? She would write a long letter to him, telling him of her disappointment.

As she mused thus the sound of footsteps broke the silence, and a well-known figure appeared on the terrace. A bright crimson flush rose to Una's face as she rose to greet the new-comer, and standing thus with that rich glow staining the delicate cheeks, and the great dark eyes bright with pleasure, she was beautiful enough to tempt any man beyond his honour, and so Lord Graydon felt as he clasped the slender hand held out to him with such graciousness.

"Lord Graydon!" she cried, in tones of real pleasure, "this is indeed a surprise."

"And a pleasurable one, I hope," he murmured, in tones that were not quite steady. How could he tell, poor boy, that the coquette's heart had only stirred at the thought of having some one to wait upon her slightest wish—one whom, if the man she loved failed, she would accept for his title.

Ianthe rose also, with a languor in her movements that betokened her failing health, and a sharp pang went through George's heart as he remembered how blithely and gaily she had tripped about in the days that seemed so far in the past now—days that, alas! would never come again.

"Have you been home long?" asked Ianthe, as she sank back again on to the couch, the exertion and excitement bringing a bright colour to her waxen cheeks.

"Not long—only two days," he replied.

The three sat there very quiet for a few moments, then George rose, saying to Ianthe,—

"Shall I read something to you—you used to be fond of Tennyson, would you care to hear me read now?" Ianthe's face brightened as he spoke; she loved to hear her favourite poet's words read by Lord Graydon, for he had a pleasant clear voice and a perfect pronunciation.

"Will you read to me, Lord Graydon?" she said, "it is kind of you to think of it. I have not been very well lately, and I cannot amuse myself out of doors as I did."

He turned the pages of the book slowly, and Ianthe waited in calm expectation. Una, wondering what he would choose, leant back on the velvet lounge with half-closed velvety eyes. Presently his voice fell upon the stillness, low and sweet as a woman's,—

"On either side the river lie

Long fields of barley and of rye,

That clothe the wold and meet the sky;

And thro' the field the road runs by

To many-tower'd Camelot."

Over Ianthe's face a thousand flickering changes passed as the beautiful words of the poem dropped slowly and distinctly from his lips. Love had indeed been her curse, but she would not have it altered. The reading of the poem had far from a soothing effect upon her, for it brought back with full force all the tender hopes she had cherished in her pure girlish heart, and as the last words passed Lord Graydon's lips she laid her head back upon the cushion with a quivering sigh, clasping her tiny hands to keep back the cry of anguish that rose from her soul.

"That is a beautiful poem, but I think that a girl who dies for love must be very weak-natured," remarked Una.

Lord Graydon gazed at the fair frail girl lying on the couch, and then at the beautiful imperious woman reclining in all her power of strength and beauty near. No, she did not look like one who would die for love.

"Some natures are too gentle to bear the reverses of this world; they are not weak, that is the mistake, it is the strength of their love that wears out the frail body," he replied; then he turned to Ianthe, saying, "Are you tired, or shall I read part of 'In Memoriam'?"

"It would be more reasonable to ask if you are tired," she said with a smile, "I am only listening."

He did not read it through, but picked out verses here and there, and Ianthe listened with dreamy violet eyes that seemed to mirror the soul within in their clear depths.

"George!" she said suddenly, calling him by his Christian name, as in the days of their childhood, "I cannot bear any more, though it is lovely; I can scarcely explain the feeling that comes over me; it is not of unhappiness, rather of exultation, but it takes my strength all away."

The sweet voice was very low, and the face was pale almost to pallor, while the outstretched hands shook with the emotion that stirred her soul. He laid the book aside, a lump rising in his throat; truly the strength of her love was wearing the body away.

Una looked up in calm surprise as her cousin's voice broke the thread of her thoughts which had wandered away. She could not understand the effect the poet's words had upon Ianthe. Her mind was too much taken up with her own affairs for her to see that Ianthe loved Gabriel, and it was well it should be so.

"What is it, Miss Ianthe?" asked the young fellow, bending forward—much to Una's annoyance, though there was no cause for jealousy—and taking her outstretched hands in his. "You are not well. Sir Arthur ought to take you to the seaside for a month or two!"

He spoke in a soothing tone, as he would have spoken to a child, for Ianthe was scarcely more in years, though she loved with the strength of a woman.

"Call annie, will you?" she returned quietly. "Did you see Mr. Varne in London?" she asked, as Miss Weir entered the room, an anxious, worried look on her kindly face.

"Yes."

Lord Graydon flushed and stammered over this one word as though he were uttering a falsehood, but Ianthe did not notice this. It did not escape Una's observation, and she set her teeth ominously.

"He did not say when he was coming home?" pursued the girl; then seeing that he was not inclined or could not answer, she added, "Your cousin Agathé wrote a ridiculous letter to Una the other day about him, and I am anxious for him to return to refute it."

"Oh, yes! She told me she had said something to Miss Raye that would get Varne a good teasing when he returned," he said, trying to speak carelessly; but now Ianthe saw that he knew more than he appeared to.

"I shall not believe a word of what Agathé says until I see him, and then if he says it is true—"

She paused; and Una, who had risen and was standing with her dark head proudly erect, and a gleam of passion in her black eyes, turned to her with a scornful curl of her scarlet lip.

"And if he does?" she asked, coldly.

"I shall be sorry," was the reply, spoken simply and earnestly, and Una laughed a short, harsh laugh that had in its tone more of wounded pride than love.

"So shall I, Ianthe; but he will be the most to be pitied, I fancy."

"Will you come for a stroll in the grounds, Miss Raye?" asked the young lord, seeing that the talking was too much for Ianthe; and Una turned without reply, and passed out of the window, down the steps, and on to the sunlit lawn.

They walked on in silence until they were at the verge of the wood where Gabriel Varne had told his love. Then Una Raye turned and faced her companion, a look of determination in her eyes.

"Lord Graydon, you saw Gabriel Varne in London? Did you see him alone, or was he in the company of the woman your cousin mentions?" she said, in clear, distinct tones; and he stood before her silent, not knowing what to do—unwilling to betray the man, unwilling to tell an untruth.

"Surely you can answer me, Lord Graydon? Did you see Gabriel with this beautiful dark-eyed woman or did you not?" she continued.

"I did," was his reply, spoken as if the words were forced from him against his will.

"Then Gabriel Varne is a traitor to his plighted word."

She drew herself up proudly and set her teeth hard, till her mouth became a thin scarlet line across the whiteness of her skin, and the dark eyes had a gleam in them that would have startled her companion had he seen it; but his gaze was fixed moodily upon the sparkling, rippling brook, as it floated along the leaf-strewn ground, babbling this sequel to the love-tale it had whispered to the stones in the fair springtime.

Knowing the love that filled his heart for this woman, he felt that he was playing a treacherous part in telling of Gabriel's perfidy, though he still held that he deserved to lose Una.

He drew out his handkerchief to wipe his forehead, for great beads of perspiration had started out in his struggle between love and honour, and as he did so a crumpled piece of paper fell to the ground.

Una stooped and picked it up, mechanically smoothing out the creases.

She did not notice what she was doing, letting her eyes travel over the written lines in her preoccupation.

Suddenly she started, turning to her companion.

"You knew of this," she said, pointing to the letter.

"I—I—! Where did you get that, Miss Raye?" he cried, a bewildered expression passing over his face.

"The letter is not mine, I know, and I really did not think of what I was doing when I picked it up," she returned, feeling slightly ashamed of her breach of honour. "But why did you not tell me?"

"You forget, Miss Raye," he remarked, quietly. "My honour forbade that I should play the part of informer."

"Might you not have spared me the mortification of having written to him, even while he was cantering about with this old love of his?" she asked, reproachfully, lifting her dark eyes to his face.

"Una!" he cried passionately, that glance of gentle appeal nearly unmaning him, and then he drew back. No; not yet would he declare his love, he would wait till the wound was healed before he spoke the words that were trembling on his tongue; but Una had read that one monosyllable right, and it was with a feeling of triumph in her heart that she returned to the house.

Gabriel should not have it in his power to say that he had jilted her, he should return to find her the bride-elect of the heir of Graydon.

"Uncle," she said, as she stood in the drawing-room after dinner that evening. "Uncle, Lord Graydon saw Gabriel with this unknown woman; it must be true that she is an old love."

"You would do well to have as much faith in your lover as Ianthe has in her friend," was his rather sternly-spoken reply.

"It is no want of faith, uncle," she returned. "You must acknowledge that even in the first instance his conduct was strange. Why did he go away without first telling me?"

"Have I not told you that he was compelled to go. I am tired of such womanish nonsense!" he exclaimed impatiently.

"Allowing that, why did he maintain perfect silence for nearly a month, and then, when he writes, never mention a word of what he himself is doing? You are either very blind, uncle, or determined to go against me," said the girl calmly.

"You are wilful and headstrong as your mother was, taking no advice, believing your own way must be the best, no matter what others say to the contrary. Take care you do not live to rue it as she did," returned Sir Arthur gravely, as he walked away with a book in his hand, and settled himself in a cosy armchair.

This was the first allusion he had ever made to a sorrow in the life of her dead mother, and a quick throb stirred her heart. What was it that her mother had learned to rue? Had she married some one against her parents' wish? She longed to hear more of this mother of whom Sir Arthur spoke so slightly, but she knew it would be of no use to ask him; he had closed the conversation with that last sentence, and did not intend to say any more on the subject.

"Shall I sing to you, auntie?" she asked, going over to where Miss Weir sat beside Ianthe, and her cousin looked up with a pleased smile.

"Yes, do," she said. "Sing 'Break, Break, Break.'"

Una sang that and several other songs at Ianthe's request, but she was restless by nature; and the uncertainty about Gabriel rendered her more so, and she soon rose from the piano and sat down by her cousin, saying,—

"I wish we had more society. I am sure that that is what makes you so languid. I shall soon get the same."

The sweet serene violet eyes rested on the dark, restless face for a moment; then she said with a soft smile,—

"Nay, Una; my illness is not caused by that. I am fond of this peaceful, quiet home-life; it suits my thoughts."

"Exactly; that is just it," returned Una, who when she was not brooding over her own wrongs could not help but see that her cousin was slowly fading to the "Land of the Leal!" and a quail of pain struck her as she thought over the possibility of Ianthe's death. "You ought to be roused. I do not mean by exertion, but a little excitement would do you good," she added.

"I think, dear, the whirl and turmoil of a London season would finish me off," said Ianthe. "I never did care about balls and parties. I went to them when I was asked, but I should have been just as happy at home."

"You are a strange child!" observed Una, laying one hand on the slender wrist as she toyed with the wavy tresses of gold with the other, looking very lovely in this new mood of tenderness. "I shall be glad when the harvest has been gathered in, and you are off to the sea-side, though it will part us for a while," she added, and Ianthe smiled up at her feeling the sincerity in the low rich tones.

While they sat thus forming a group that would have served an artist for a picture of "Heaven and Earth," the sound of carriage-

wheels broke upon the evening's stillness, and in another moment Lady Graydon appeared, followed by her son.

"Miss Weir," she said, in a clear voice that rang pleasantly through the room, "you must pardon this intrusion; but when George arrived home this morning he found his aunt Agatha and cousin there, and we have arranged a visit to Graydon Woods, which will lose all its pleasure if you do not come."

"I am sure sure, Lady Graydon, you need not apologise for coming, but rather for your neglect of us lately," said Sir Arthur, rising and placing a seat for her near his cousin Isabel Weir.

"Now, I did not come here to be overwhelmed by reproaches, but to ask if you will come. Ianthe, my dear child," she added, "what is the matter? You do not look like the same girl."

"There is nothing the matter with me," said Ianthe; "I am only a little tired, dear Lady Graydon."

"But a girl of your age has no business to feel tired. You are not fretting about a lover," she said, half in earnest, half in jest, for the sad change in the once light-hearted merry girl shocked her a little, and she would have liked to set things right had that been possible.

"Indeed, indeed, no!" cried Ianthe, rising excitedly from her recumbent position, and gazing with startled eyes at the kind face of Lady Graydon.

"Well, well, dear, do not put yourself out about it; it is not so dreadful a charge to bring against you," returned the old lady, and Ianthe sank back again with a deep sigh of relief.

Her secret was safe.

She had fancied for a moment that her visitor guessed, and a wild feeling that she must run away and hide herself had come over her.

The reaction was almost too much for her in her weak state, and she lay back with closed eyes and heaving bosom, listening as in a dream to the conversation going on around her.

She became aware after a while that they were speaking of Gabriel Varne, and she opened her eyes as Lady Graydon said,—

"Did I not hear that you were engaged to him, my dear?"

Ianthe looked at her cousin as she sat on her dark crimson satin fauteuil, the rich amber of her robe throwing up the intense darkness of her hair and eyes.

She looked like a beautiful Spaniard more than an English woman, with that black lace scarf wound round her head, and falling over the white jewel-decked bosom.

Ianthe's heart beat quicker, and a little pink flush rose to her cheeks as she watched her.

Why did she not say out boldly—"Yes, I am?"

What did that quick upward glance and shrug of the polished shoulders mean?

Ah! how proud she would have been to have said—"Yes, he is my affianced lover, and I trust him, no matter what is said against him."

But Una only sat there with that arch look in her Spanish eyes, a mocking laugh lingering round her full scarlet mouth.

She, too, loved Gabriel, but she in her pride would not let the world know that he had slighted her for a light o'-love.

The tale of his intrigue was on every lip. Should she then acknowledge that she was meekly waiting here until he grew tired of his London beauty and came down to marry her?

No! and she threw her head up with a haughty smile, turning to Lady Graydon with a graceful her own, as she said in soft, laughing tones,—

"People are too kind to give me a lover so rich and clever as he. Only let a young girl and a young man be seen twice together in a village, and it is sure to be said that they are engaged."

"Is it not a glorious night, Miss Raye?" said Lord Graydon, leaning over Una's chair. "Come out on to the terrace and watch the moon rise."

Una rose, and, with a bright smile across at Ianthe, passed through the window on to the terrace.

A slight haze hung over the land, and dark clouds floated slowly across the sky, hiding the bright twinkling stars from their view. There was a perfect stillness in the air; no night-ingle's song startled them as they stood there silent.

Presently the moon rose above the hills, the round red harvest moon casting a strange weird glow over the stately dark hills, throwing flickering shadows on the silent gloomy wood as the clouds passed swiftly across its surface, and showing the corn in the fields to their right, that had stood so proud and stately in the sunlight that morning, lying on the ground in golden heaps.

There was something grand in the sight of the rising of that great red moon. The hills seemed to stand out so dark and still as it moved slowly up, up, till it was high in the sky.

The clouds had all drifted together in one great bank, and swept away to the south, leaving the moon alone with the stars; and the moon hung over the wood like a ball of light, revealing the tall swaying firs and straight poplars that seemed to meet the sky.

A gust of soft but strong wind swept up the sloping land, loosening the lace mantilla which Una had put round her, and Lord Graydon put out his hand to adjust it.

It was as they stood thus, she with her eyes upraised, a bewildering smile on her lips, he with down-bent head and longing gaze fixed upon her lovely face, that a bent figure passed along near the wood, and looking back at the house, caught sight of those two standing on the terrace in the strange glow of the harvest moonlight.

"She has her mother's blood in her veins," he muttered, and passed on unseen.

"Una!"

It was Lord Graydon who breathed that one word in a soft low tone, but the girl started as though some spirit from the other world had appeared.

"Una!" Did that word slip out unconsciously, or was he about to put the question she knew he wished to ask?

Now that the time had come she felt she would do anything to put it off.

She loved Gabriel, though she loved money more, and a slight struggle went on in her mind as to what answer she should make.

But Lord Graydon had a finer sense of honour than this beautiful scheming woman, and though she had wished to ward the question off, his next words vexed and piqued her.

"Una," he said, bending over her till the grey eyes met the black ones, which returned his gaze unflinchingly, unabashed. "Una, if Gabriel Varne is false, as he appears to be, what is your line of conduct to be?"

"I do not quite understand you, my lord," she returned, coldly.

"Why did you not answer my mother's words at once, and straightforwardly," he went on, paying no heed outwardly to her coldness of manner. "Am I to infer from that that you intend discarding your lover?"

"You may infer what you please, Lord Graydon," she replied, still in those cold, hard tones that grated on his ear.

She would not comprehend such absurdity as this. If he loved her, why not confess it? He had nothing to stay him. Perhaps he, too, had been playing a double game, and now his cousin Agathe had come! As this thought flashed into her mind she drew her lace mantilla closer round her beautiful throat, and turned towards the window, saying,—

"I think we had better go in now."

"Nay, Una, not till you tell me in what have I offended you. Why are you so cold and distant to me to-night?"

"I am not in the least offended," she replied, quietly, and in a softer tone, seeing that she had power to move him; and then they stood silently watching the moon and stars till Lady Graydon's voice was heard calling to them. Then, as they turned to obey the summons, George stooped and whispered,—

"When you have seen Gabriel Varne again I shall have a question to ask." She raised her eyes, liquid with intelligence, to his face. She could not understand the sense of honour that tied his tongue, but she read his meaning in that significant downward glance.

"These chairs that bind me to a traitor shall soon be shattered," she told herself, as she laid her dark, beautiful false face on the lace pillow that night.

CHAPTER IX.

EARLY next morning Una entered Ianthe's room, pulling the dainty lace curtains aside, and disclosing the fair sweet face lying on the white pillow, sad and wide-eyed. It was evident from the deep lines under the violet orbs that little sleep had visited her that night, and the long fair hair lay in tangled golden masses about her face, showing how she had tossed and turned in the restlessness born of her sorrow.

"Has anything unusual occurred?" she asked, on seeing her cousin standing there with that grave thoughtful look upon her countenance.

"No; only I want to talk to you about something very important," was the reply, as the girl seated herself on the side of the bed.

The light fell through a chink in the Venetians full on to the superbly beautiful dark face, showing to her cousin's quick eyes marks of the struggle that had taken place in her heart during the past night, and Ianthe thought to herself,—

"I am not the only one who has spent a sleepless night." Aloud, she said, putting her hand out of the bed, such a frail, blue-veined hand, "Una, is it about Gabriel?"

"Yes," replied the girl, briefly, and then she sat silent, and Ianthe waited patiently, wondering what Una's next words would be.

"Well?" she said at last, seeing that Una's thoughts had carried her far away from her present surroundings.

Una roused herself with a start, looking intently into that pure fair face, so saintlike in its expression, ere she spoke.

"Do you not think yourself that Gabriel's conduct is strange?" she asked.

"It is; but he will set all right when he comes," urged the girl.

"You are perfect in your faith, Ianthe, but I am not, and I intend writing to him asking either for a full explanation, or my freedom," returned Una, and Ianthe knew that her determination was fixed. Still she strove to turn her back from this decision.

"Remember, Una, you are deciding for your whole future," she said, gravely, and with solemnity beyond her years thrilling her sweet girlish tones. "It is not a question of now or next week, but of your life. Think over it well, Una, I beg of you!"

To some natures Ianthe's words would have brought consolation, but her sole thought was for Gabriel's happiness. He loved this vacillating beautiful girl, and marriage with her was his dream of bliss. If it could be accomplished by any word or deed of hers his life should be crowned with this joy, she told herself, and so she spoke those gentle, serious words to her cousin.

"I do remember all that, Ianthe, and also that he has behaved shamefully towards me, and I feel that I am doing just what any girl would do under the circumstances. Gabriel Varne has played the part of traitor, and must suffer the consequences," was the reply, spoken in a tone of injured love.

(To be continued.)

ADELE.

—o—

We have gone our separate ways, Adele;
You have vowed a vow that you do not feel,
For you stood, last night, in your white
brocade,
With orange-blossoms in each golden braid,
While you vowed to love— Were you are
not afraid
That the lie would scorch your lips, Adele?

Your warm red lips would scorch, Adele,
As you swore him love for woe or weal,
The grey-haired man who stood at your
side,
Whose gold had bought his winsome bride
To grace his halls so grand and wide,
For you had no love to give, Adele.

Nay, you had no love to give, Adele:
Ay, your pride against me you fain would
steel.
Will you dare, then, to look at a violet,
With the dew of an April morn all wet?
Ah, I hold the mastery even yet—
You may not deny me that, Adele.

Farewell! I bear no ill, Adele.
But I would that I to-day might kneel
By a grave, and say:—"She died in her
youth,
In her girlhood's beauty and girlhood's
truth."
Might dream of a face with no tinge of
ruth,
As I kissed, on the stone, the name—Adele.

F. E. S.

VERNON'S DESTINY.

—o—

CHAPTER XVI.

MISS CHARTERIS, although endowed with most of the virtues incidental to women, had not escaped a failing peculiar, I think, to those good, domesticated creatures who excel as housewives and nurses. She had no sympathy whatever with literary taste.

Much as she was taken by Lena, kindly as she had received her brother's wife, Mrs. Charteris had in her eyes one great defect. She had written stories.

Nay, more, she wrote them still! No human being, save ourselves, knows what we who write what is called fiction—who give, as it were, the best creations of our brains for others' amusement—have to suffer from our sister women.

It seems to me the wives who have no greater pride than to spend their husband's money well, and order his household discreetly, might spare a little of the venom they pour upon our heads.

After all, it surely is almost as praiseworthy to share the burden of existence by earning money, as simply to make another person's earnings go as far as possible; and yet I firmly believe there never was a woman yet who wrote for money, but what other women loved to pick holes in her domestic arrangements, specially the women of her husband's family, who, if anything, should have been grateful to her for relieving John, James, or Joseph of so much extra expense.

It is a wrong little spoken of, but to my mind it is a crushing one. I believe I am as domesticated as ninety-nine women out of a hundred, yet because I do not possess the extraordinary genius for the kitchen exhibited by the hundredth, I have had the heads of many amiable matrons shaken at me, and it has all been laid with a deprecating sniff—I hate sniffs—to my luckless writing.

Well, Meg Charteris possessed in a moderate degree this objectionable quality of sniffing. I am sorry for it, since she was a good,

true-hearted girl, and admirable in most conditions of life. Yet when her sister-in-law calmly suggested her intention of "getting into" Charteris Hall, Meg could not help relieving her feelings by a prodigious sniff, and the remark,—

"This comes of novel writing."
"No, it doesn't," said Lit, speaking quite gently, though she uttered a flat contradiction. "I think it comes of sympathy."
"Sympathy! For whom?"
"Helen Charteris."
"Mrs. Denzil!"

"Yes. I can't make you believe me, Meg, but I think you know me well enough to feel I wouldn't speak so positively unless I knew I was sure in my own mind."

"But, my dear Lit, I don't know yet what it is you do feel sure of."

"That there is some cruel wrong being wrought at Charteris Hall. That—perhaps some, I am not positive—our cousin, yours and mine, Meg, remember, is shut up there a prisoner."

"My dear Lit, your imagination runs away with you; it does, indeed."

For answer young Mrs. Charteris rose, drew up one of the blinds, and placed herself so that the sunlight fell full upon her face.

"Do you see no change in me since you went away, Meg?"

Meg was non-plussed; she had to confess that Lena was nothing but a shadow of the bright, joyous young bride she had left.

"Well, imagination has not worked the change. I tell you, Meg, I am haunted day and night by the idea of Neil being taken in by that man, and becoming, unknown to himself, his accomplice."

"But to break into a house! Lit, can't you devise some less hazardous plan?"

"No, I can't," returned Lit, fiercely. "I see no danger in it."

"But if we are found out?"

"If Mr. Denzil or his emissaries discover us I shall say I am endeavouring to overcome my cousin's reluctance to make our acquaintance. As he frequently regrets his wife's unsociability he can't say anything."

"And if she objects to your presence?"

"She won't."

"But if she does?"

"I shall tell her that some months ago I promised Sir Guy Vernon to be her friend; that I feel sure my sister wronged her cruelly, and therefore I long to do something for her in atonement."

"You have my promise, Lit, to go with you; but I don't like the scheme."

"It can have no danger. I do believe, Meg, you think people will take us up for house-breakers. I'm sure Mr. Denzil comes to my house often enough without invitation; why shouldn't I go to his?"

"Only tell me what you want of me!"

"In the first place invite me to spend the evening with you!"

"Willingly; but won't Neil think it odd I don't ask him too?"

"He must stay here to entertain Mr. Denzil. It would not be correct for a stranger to come to Fir Cottage while Lady Maude is away; so you can't be expected to include your unknown cousin in the invitation. I shall come back with you about six, and Neil must fetch me when Mr. Denzil takes his leave; they can walk together as far as the Park gates; that will ensure our knowing exactly how long we may count on Mr. Denzil's absence."

"Lit, I wish you would tell me; supposing you find things as you say, what do you mean to do?"

"To do!"

"If Helen Charteris is really unhappy and ill-treated, how do you mean to remedy her wrongs?"

"I should bring her here," returned Lit, calmly, "and telegraph for your father."

"Don't you want to know what has kept us so long away, Lit?" hazarded Meg, forgetting she was introducing the very subject Lady Maude had advised her to avoid.

"No," said Lit languidly, "they told me at the cottage aunt had gone off to meet some old friends from Ayton. I suppose she found them more interesting than she expected, and cannot tear herself away. I was at my wit's end when they could not tell me when you were expected, but now I don't mind."

"I shall have to go back to-morrow to London."

"To London?" asked Lit, listlessly.

"Can't Lady Maude spare you a few days?"

"She is not in London, but staying with a friend near Gloucester" (it seemed to Meg she might speak of the unhappy Pearl as a friend of Lady Maude). "I think she will be detained there quite another fortnight."

"Ah! And, Meg, what did you do with the poor girl in the Park I brought to you?"

The very question Meg had feared.

"We did our best for her, dear, Aunt Maude gave her food and money."

"And did she tell you her story?"

"Only enough for us to guess she had had heavy troubles."

"And you lost sight of her, I suppose? Meg, I would have liked to help her."

"She was helped, Lit. Aunt found her some nice lodgings, and saw that she was made quite comfortable."

"I should like to have seen her again!"

"You have Neil to think of," said Meg, gaily. "I don't think Lit, he would have liked you to see much of that poor wail. He is so very careful of you."

"And yet he lets me see Reginald Denzil."

"That is different. Lena, I do believe that is Neil's step. You must explain things to him, I cannot."

Miss Charteris found when the young doctor came in there was no trace of estrangement between him and his wife; they might differ in their opinions of Mr. Denzil, but in all else there was the most perfect union between them.

Neil kissed Lit as though they had been parted for years, shook hands with his sister, and asked eagerly,—

"Doesn't she look like a little white ghost, Meg? I tell her the village will think I beat her."

"There is no fear of that," said Meg, lightly; "but Neil, she does look very tried. I want you to spare her to spend the evening quietly with me."

"Why can't you come here, Meg? I should like to introduce you to Mr. Denzil."

"I have not the smallest wish to know him. Papa's account of him was enough for me. Can't you and your guest have a bachelor *à la carte*, and spare Lena to brighten my loneliness?"

"Say 'Yes,' Neil," interposed his wife. "Indeed, I must go the cottage, for I invited myself."

"And how are you to get home?"

"Well, you generally see Mr. Denzil part of the way home. Escort him to-night as far as the Park gates, then you can leave him and pick up me in exchange."

"All right; you always get your own way, Lit."

"I deserve it," said Lena, with great seriousness. "Now, Meg, I must just break to cook and Jane the news of my temporary absence, and I am ready."

The moment she had left the room, Neil turned to his sister,—

"Don't you think Lit looks very ill?"

"She looks worried."

"She has nothing to be worried about. She is a dear girl, but she will take the most extraordinary prejudices."

"That is a feminine privilege. What are they about?" inquired Meg, with assumed calm.

"Well, there's this man Denzil; he's not half so black as he's been painted, and considering we've got to have him for a neighbour, I think we'd much better be civil to him."

"Civil, by all means; but civility does not require intimacy."

"Hang it! Meg, I do believe Lit's been talking to you. I assure you the man's as right as possible now. He may have been a little wild; but, then, who hasn't?"

Meg was surprised at her own impetuosity. She sprang up from her seat, and put a hand on her brother's arm.

"Let Mr. Denzil show you his wife well and happy, with a smile on her face, and I will believe all the good you can say of him."

"Really, Meg, you are as bad as Lit. I have explained to her over and over again that Mrs. Reginald Denzil is a most objectionable young woman, and all the slight and rudeness we have received come from her. A man can't help it if his wife is too badly-mannered to call to see her own relations."

"Husband and wife are one," said Miss Charteris, sententiously; and then she was glad to be spared all further private conversation by the reappearance of Lena, a large dark shawl on one arm, and a small covered basket in her hand.

"My dear child," said Neil, laughing, "Meg is quite able to provide you with tea. Are you carrying a private supply of provisions in case your appetite requires more than she has in the cottage?"

"Perhaps!" and Mrs. Charteris echoed her husband's laugh a little wistfully. "Now, remember, Neil, I don't mind how late you come for me, but it is not to be before ten o'clock."

"All right."

The sisters-in-law never spoke until they were in Meg's own bedroom, when Lena opened the basket, and displayed its contents with a little pride—a small flat candlestick, two candles, a lot of safety matches, and an opened letter.

"Read that, Meg. Could anything have happened more fortunately? With that I feel quite sure of success."

It was a half-sheet of notepaper, and bore these lines:—

"Meet me at Charteris Green at nine, or as soon after as possible.—R. DENZIL."

"Lit, you must be mad! What good can this paper do you?"

"All the good in the world. Mr. Denzil sent it to my husband yesterday, and the appointment came off this morning; but there is neither date nor address. I am going to put it into a blank envelope and persuade the old housekeeper to give it to Lydia Catt, the maid who keeps guard over Mrs. Denzil. Charteris Green is more than three miles off, so that she will have to start at eight, and then—"

Lena's eyes gleamed with excitement, but Meg could not join in her enthusiasm. Miss Charteris felt really involved in a wild-goose chase, and, being common-place and matter-of-fact by nature, she wished herself safely out of it.

"Lydia Catt is sure to suspect this is nothing but a hoax. When Mr. Denzil could talk to her in private in any room at the Hall, is it likely he would appoint an interview three miles off?"

"Do you know, Meg, you are wrong for once. This Catt has a brother (never mind how I know it, I do know it) who keeps a public-house at Charteris Green, and Mr. Denzil and his wife's waiting-maid have had a private interview there before now. I think it was that first roused my suspicions of foul play. I was at my wit's end what to do when I found this note on Niel's table. That and your sudden return have filled me with hope."

"And do you mean to go to the Hall and confront Miss Catt?"

"I mean to send one of the Lodge children up with the note."

"They will let out all."

"I don't think so. The family at the Lodge hate Lydia Catt. In fact, considering how short a time she has been here, she is generally detested. I shall promise Billie sixpence if he takes the note and does not say who sent it."

"And then?"

They were back in the dining-room now, and White had brought in tea. Meg laid slices of delicate chicken and tasty ham on Lena's plate, but they were almost untasted; the girl seemed too excited, too overwrought, to eat.

"I don't know," and Lena laid down her knife and fork while she looked into Meg's face, as though to demand her help. "I should like to creep in somehow without anyone's knowing, only I feel sure it would vex Niel when he heard of it."

"Yes."

"Then I don't know whether I could trust the butler; you know he and his wife were left in charge of the house, and Mr. Denzil brought down no new servants except Catt. A young woman comes in to do the washing up, Mrs. Raymond does the cooking, and her husband waits at table."

"Mrs. Raymond has known me ever since I was a baby, Lit. I think she would do anything in the world for me. If you like we will walk over to the Hall together as soon as you think Lydia Catt has started; then I am pretty sure I can persuade Mrs. Raymond to consent to anything you propose."

"Meg, you are a darling; let us take the note down to the lodge now and send Billie off with it."

"Make your sixpence a shilling, Lit, and tell him to watch till Miss Catt passes through the lodge gates. I think myself she will go before eight; she will naturally prefer a light walk to a dark one, and if her brother keeps the public house he would entertain her till her master dined."

"Meg, are you laughing at me?"

"No, Lena, but I hate mystery and plots. I would ever so much rather have gone with you to Reginald Denzil himself, and said point blank, 'We are your wife's cousins, and we won't leave this house till we have seen her.'"

"Oh, Meg! I never knew anyone so downright as you are. But you wouldn't have seen her, mark my words!"

"Perhaps not. Lit, if this exploit fails, will you promise me to give up your romantic search?"

"I can't do that, Meg."

"Dear, do promise me."

"I'll promise you not to stir in the matter again myself; if I discover nothing to-night, to-morrow I shall send for Sir Guy Vernon, tell him all I know, and leave the rest to him."

The sisters followed out Meg's programme. The note was taken directly after tea, and the woman at the lodge promised Billie should refuse to say who gave it him.

"Dear me, Miss Charteris," said the old servant respectfully, "there's not one of us villagers but hates that Catt. I reckon we'd all like to ride her. I often pity our poor young lady, if it's true she sees no one else but that white-faced creature."

Billie was back at the cottage by seven o'clock. Lydia Catt had passed through the gates and was walking rapidly towards Charteris Green.

"She seemed in 'a rare taking,'" the hopeful youth added, "and had said she wouldn't get back till long past ten."

Lit paid her shilling and Billie departed, wishing for a similar job every day. Then Lit and her sister-in-law looked at each other. Both felt the moment had come, but neither liked to take the first and decisive step.

"It is no use delaying it," said Meg stoutly. "If your mind is quite made up we had better start at once."

"I am quite ready."

"How you tremble!"

"I feel as though I were on the track," said Lena Charteris, her white hands clasped together and the fire of enthusiasm flushing from her eyes. "Meg, don't you feel excited? Remember we are about to avenge a great wrong!"

"We don't know yet that there has been any wrong," said Meg, prosaically; "you had

better wrap yourself up warmly, Lit, the September evenings are chilly."

It sounded a little flat to the girl whose breast heaved with an ambition such as Lena's, who felt it as thoroughly her mission to find out and release her cousin as ever did Joan of Arc believe it hers to rescue France from the English; but Lit knew Meg meant well, and let a fur-lined cloak of Lady Maude's be substituted for her dark shawl without any demur.

"Now we are ready!"

"Yes, I wish my teeth did not chatter so, it's just as though I were frightened!"

"You look just like a little white ghost, Lit," retorted Meg. "One thing, please remember, if it's all a dead failure and Neil's angry about it, do tell him I tried hard to dissuade you but you would go."

"I don't think Neil will be angry. I shall tell him I felt it to be my duty. I would not have gone alone, Meg, but with you he can't think it wrong."

She leaned on Meg's arm; she had never been very strong since the accident in the beginning of the year, and no one knew better than her sister-in-law what care and tenderness she needed; but Meg understood illness, and she felt the secret anxiety gnawing at Lena's heart was doing her far more harm than could come of this expedition, however it ended.

They walked on in perfect silence till they reached the grand entrance. Meg rang the bell.

"Leave it to me," she said kindly, as she felt Lit's hand tremble on her own. "The daughter of one Lord Charteris, the granddaughter of another, and for five years the actual mistress of this house, I surely have a right to introduce myself to its present owner; and no one can find anything scandalous in my calling at this hour, since it is well known I am only at home for one day and a night."

So, though she had set her face so fixedly against the expedition, she now took the whole burden of it upon her own shoulders. It was just like Meg.

Lena could only murmur her gratitude; in truth Neil's wife was feeling weak and overwrought from excitement; her mind had planned the scheme well, and she meant to go through with it; but she was not strong, and her powers were well nigh spent; so that but for Meg she might have failed after all.

"We have not come only to see you," said Meg, when they were established in the old housekeeper's private parlour, and trying to do justice to the home-made cake and wine; "the fact is, Mrs. Charteris and I have made up our minds to see Mrs. Denzil."

The old housekeeper threw up her hands. "My dear Miss Meg, it's impossible; the young mistress sees no one."

"Have you seen her, Raymond?"

"I was there in the Hall to welcome her the night when first she came, miss, but Mr. Denzil said she was asleep; he and Miss Catt carried her upstairs to her own room, and she has never left it since."

"Raymond, you have known us a long time, I want you to answer me frankly. Mr. Denzil gives out his wife refuses to see any of her own relatives, that she is of a sulky, taciturn disposition, and likes to be alone—is it true?"

"But how am I to tell you, Miss Meg, when I've never even seen her face nor heard the sound of her voice?"

"Mrs. Charteris says—and I confess I begin to share her belief—that our cousin may be shut up here against her will; that within a stone's throw of those who would welcome her as a relative she is actually shut up a prisoner in her own house. Now, what do you think?"

If Meg had expected vehement denial, or great surprise, she was to be disappointed. Mrs. Raymond folded her withered hands and nodded her old head emphatically.

"Dear Miss Meg, but that's what I've said to the old man myself. We've talked it over

many a time. I've listened at the door for the half hour together when that Catt was out, hoping I'd hear something, that if things were wrong I might let the poor lady know there was a humble friend she might trust; but I never heard a single sound, not even a moan, and when I spoke to Adam he just shook his head and says it is not for the like of us to interfere with the family, and that there couldn't be much amiss with Mr. Denzil while he was friends with Mr. Neil, and spent more time at the Rosery than at his own home."

Lena threw up her hands, and a low sob escaped her.

"I told you so," she said, half reproachfully, to Meg. "I felt we were sharing in the wrong."

As for Meg Charteris she seemed another creature. She had been singularly averse to the expedition, but now that she was actually here she espoused the unknown Helen's cause as heartily as Lena could desire.

"Raymond," she said, gravely, "I have come here to-night to see my cousin. You know that I was once mistress here, that in some sort I may claim to represent my father and mother, both absent in a foreign land. By all the years you have served our family, by the loyalty you owe to the name of Charteris, I demand admission to Mrs. Denzil's rooms for my sister and for myself."

"Indeed, indeed, Miss Meg," said the old woman, eagerly, "I should like nothing better than for you to see the poor young lady. It's gone to my heart often to think how lonely some she was!"

"Then show us the room."

"But the door's locked."

Meg's eyes shone with indignation. She might be slower far than Lit in hunting out a wrong, but once discovered she was second to none in her horror of it.

"Do you mean that they actually have her locked up! her husband and the woman they call her maid?"

"I mean just that, Miss Charteris."

"And you have suffered it?"

"I beg your pardon, Miss Meg, but how could I prevent it? a poor woman like me."

"You might have gone to Doctor Charteris. You might have written to my father."

"I should have gone to Lord Charteris right enough, Miss Meg, but he is in foreign parts and my old fingers were never good at writing. Of what use was it to speak to the doctor, when Mr. Denzil was hand and glove with him, so to say."

Both the girls winced.

"And they took her up," persevered Meg, returning to her charge, "and you never even remonstrated?"

"I did that, Miss Meg, but that Catt woman just up and told me to mind my own business. What was it to me? she asked, if her lady had a horror of feeling that anyone in this great, lonely house might break in upon her suddenly. Mrs. Denzil was very nervous she said, and specially feared meeting any of her relations. Surely, if she asked Catt to lock the door, it was Catt's duty to lock it!"

"And what did you say, Raymond?"

"I didn't know rightly what to say, ma'am, but I felt sure something was wrong, and you couldn't have felt more uneasy yourself, nor you either my dear Miss Meg, than I have done lately!"

"Just tell us all you can—who takes up the meals. I suppose they don't starve the poor creature altogether!"

"Mrs. Denzil has four meals a day, Miss Meg, and I take them up myself as far as the dressing-room door; Catt she comes and fetches them from there."

"And you never hear Mrs. Denzil's voice?"

"Never!"

"And when people have tried to see her?"

"Ah! Miss Meg, there have been a dozen cards left this week, the message is Mrs. Denzil is too unwell to receive anyone. Once or twice with old friends of the family who've been passing I've taken the cards up myself

and knocked at the dressing-room door; but Catt has always laughed and called me a fool for my pains."

"Has she not taken the cards and asked her mistress's wishes?"

"No, ma'am. It was that first made me suspicious that Catt ain't a bit like a servant. She says she attended her lady when she first came from school, and that she has been with her ever since; but to my mind she's more the mistress than the maid."

"Right o'clock!" exclaimed Lena, as the hour chimed. "Mrs. Raymond, we must be safely back at Fir Cottage before ten, so that we have no time to lose. Will you take us to Mrs. Denzil's rooms?"

"But the door's locked, ma'am!"

"I can't believe it is locked on the outside. I believe when Mrs. Denzil hears who has come to see her, she will at once turn the key and admit us."

Lena lighted one of her candles. Her peculiar aversion to Mr. Denzil made her seemingly object to be indebted to him even for a lamp. Then she motioned to the housekeeper to lead the way. Meg followed last of all. She noticed that Lena's courage had all returned now.

She looked able to conquer all obstacles. Her dark-eyes flashed with hope. Clearly she had made up her mind to triumph.

"Here?" cried Miss Charteris, incredulously, when their guide stopped. "Why these rooms were never thought much of in my time. I should never have thought them good enough for any guest except a bachelor. To think they should be allotted to the mistress of the house!"

"You see," said Mrs. Raymond, in a tone fit to make any one's blood run cold, "Mr. Denzil has rooms in the main wing. Maybe, Miss Meg, if he is a doing of his wife to death—which I've often thought possible—he'd like to sleep as far away as he could lest he should hear her groans."

Lit shivered. Meg felt her flesh creep, but she said sharply,—

"You said just now there was no sound ever heard—not even a moan."

"I said I had never heard anything, Miss Charteris," contradicted the old woman.

"Has anyone ever heard anything?"

"Adam said once he was passing, and he heard sounds fit to make his heart ache. Miss Meg, listen! Sure that's it now!"

And in truth a low wailing like a human cry, only, if possible, more weird and piteous, made itself heard.

Meg had never in her life listened to anything so awful. Lit had grown white as her own candle.

"It is like a dirge," she whispered, faintly, "or like the cry of an Irish banshee. Oh, hush! There it comes again!"

And it did—louder, more weird, more piteous sounded that strange awful wail. Meg stopped her ears. The sound tortured her. It seemed only to strengthen Lena's resolve.

"You will stand by me, dear," she said, simply, to her sister-in-law. "I have made up my mind, whatever happens, I do not leave this house until I have entered Mrs. Denzil's room, even if I meet her husband face to face. I shall stay till I have solved this cruel mystery."

"And I will stay with you."

The wailing died away; the two girls crept a little nearer each other. As for Mrs. Raymond, she was on her knees praying loudly to be saved from ghosts.

"Hush!" said Lena, "be perfectly quiet."

And then, when a silence reigned so intense it was almost pain to her over-charged heart, she bent down and put her eye to the key-hole.

"Nell!" she said, in a low, clear whisper, "we want you to open the door to us. We are your cousins, and we want to help you. Your friend Sir Guy Vernon is our friend too—he would bid you trust to us."

No answer! "She may be sleeping," hazarded Lit.



["IT IS NOT HIS WINE; IT IS HIS WIFE'S. BESIDES, I EXPECT HE IS DRINKING YOURS AT THIS MOMENT!"]

"Sleeping! You forget that awful sound. Oh! Lena, there it is again."

The wailing lasted at intervals for at least five minutes; then Lena turned to the housekeeper.

"Where is your husband?"

"Gone to Glo'ster, ma'am, on an errand for Mr. Denzil."

"And there is no one except us three women in the house besides Mrs. Denzil herself?"

"No one."

Lena waited for no more assurances; she took her brass candlestick and beat upon the door, until the noise she made was so deafening that Mrs. Raymond had her face in her apron, and Meg implored of her to desist.

"She can't be in there," said Miss Charteris, fiercely. "No human creature could listen to that cannonade and make no sound. I tell you, Lena, she is not there."

"She must be, Miss Meg," dissented the housekeeper, "asking your pardon for presuming to contradict you; but I saw Mrs. Denzil carried in there with my own eyes, and I'm ready to take my oath she has never passed the threshold since."

"Then she must be dead."

Lena's teeth chattered.

"That is what I feared; that is the dread that has lain on me all through, that we should be too late—that our effort, such as it is, would not be in time."

"If she is dead, who's that crying?" asked the housekeeper, as her terrified ears once more caught the sound of the dreary wailing. "Miss Meg, it's not for me to suggest such a thing, but you are the daughter of one Lord Charteris and the grandchild of another; and you, ma'am (to Lit) will be the mistress of this place yourself one day if anything has happened to this poor, ill-starred young creature—why don't you two ladies burst open the door?"

"How can we?" asked Meg impatiently.

"We have no tools."

"It doesn't want tools," said Lena, who caught feverishly at the suggestion. "You've only got to beat against a door with something heavy and it must give way. I have heard of men doing it with their weight—just pressing against it, but I'm afraid we're not strong enough."

"Sure you mustn't think of it, ma'am," said the housekeeper. "But downstairs we've a kitchen poker, the biggest you'd see for miles, and a kind of bludgeon like the police used to carry; either of those 'ld break the door in in a jiffy."

"Fetch them both!"

It was Lena who spoke. Her voice sounded so weak and faint that Meg amended the order.

"And bring a glass of wine for Mrs. Charteris, please, Raymond."

"Nonsense, Lit," she said severely, as her sister-in-law began a protest. "Just think of my position if you fainted. Why, besides the disappointment of never finding out the truth about Mrs. Denzil, her husband might return, and take me up for a burglar. He's never been introduced to me, you know, and might refuse to believe I am a Charteris at all."

Lena smiled pitifully.

"But to drink that man's wine!"

"It isn't his, it's his wife's. Besides, if it was his ever so, I expect he is drinking yours at this very moment. Now, Lit, you are to drink it right off, or I declare I'll go home and leave you here."

The threat was effective. Lit drained the glass Mrs. Raymond brought her, and then felt strong enough to smile at the awful-looking implements the housekeeper offered for choice.

The bludgeon was ultimately selected. The ball was substantially built, but as Raymond said admiringly, no door ever made could resist such force as blows from that bludgeon,

even when wielded by an inexperienced hand.

And so it proved, for at the third attack the door fell in, and the room which was Mrs. Denzil's retreat, or prison, was open for the entrance of her kinswomen.

"Come," said Lit, "it must be close on nine. We have no time to lose."

Hand in hand the sisters-in-law advanced. There was nothing in the dressing-room to attract their notice, but as they passed into the chamber beyond, once again there fell upon their ears that awful, weird cry, which Lit had compared to the wailing of an Irish banshee.

(To be continued.)

IMAGINATION.—The culture of imagination is worthy of a more prominent place in the training of youth than it has ever yet received. We must regard it not merely or chiefly in its intellectual capacity, or as a promoter of good taste and refinement, but as a moral and ethical educator. We should take care that the ideals they form are noble, the desires they cherish are pure, the examples they look up to are sound and true, the heroes and heroines they admire are worthy of respect. This can be done only through a loving sympathy and a tender care that provides for, not crushes, their eager and ardent enthusiasms. The examples we set them, the companions we find them, the books we furnish them, the moral atmosphere in which we place them, should all combine to purify and ennoble their imaginings, and through them to enrich and exalt their lives. If we neglect these things, or leave them to chance influences, no amount of effort to control their actions, to regulate their words, even to form their habits, can compensate. It is what each one aspires to become that will form the great motive power to decide what he may become.



[BEFORE HETTY CAN REPLY, A MAN APPEARS THROUGH A GAP IN THE EDGE—DISREPUTABLE, BOLD, AND SWAGGERING.]

NOVELETTE]

FEET OF CLAY.

—30—

CHAPTER I.

LET no one call Hero Vyvash an unhappy woman, although all the hopes she nursed in her early girlhood have been unfulfilled, all her plans frustrated, all her dreams made foolish and void.

There are times when, thinking of the past, her heart grows sick and faint, her brain dizzy with the old, old pain that shall never cease this side of the grave.

But she is a wise and a brave woman, and rarely indulges in retrospection, holding it a sin to waste her life in vain regrets and vain desires. Her days are lightened by labours of love; and there is not a man, woman, or child in Anstey that does not reverence her, and delight in her smile of approval.

For the rest my heroine is neither very beautiful nor very clever—just a brave, true Englishwoman, who bears her own cross patiently, uncomplainingly, whose feet tread her rough and lonely way steadily, and whose hands are ever ready to help the weak and the needy.

Let me tell you her strange, sad story. She has learned the full significance of the words:—

"Sweet is true love, though given in vain, in vain,
And sweet is death, who puts an end to pain."

And she has learned to cry in her dark hours,—

"I fain would follow love, if that could be,
Needs must follow death, who calls for me.
Call, and I follow, I follow! let me die!"

Go back with me ten years. It is a bright June morning, and Hero sits with her lover

in the sweet, old-fashioned garden, which is her pride and delight.

He has been reading to her, but now he closes the book and looks half-vexedly up into her deep grey eyes.

"You were not listening, Hero?" he says.

"How far away were your thoughts?"

"Not very far," faintly smiling. "I was wondering about Hetty, and what sort of life she led before she came to us? Do you think her so very handsome?"

There is a note of wistfulness in her voice, for Hero considers herself quite an ordinary little creature; and this girl, who came a week ago to change the current of her life, is handsome in face and physique.

"She is very beautiful!" Herbert says, "but I don't admire her. In some of her moods she is simply terrible. There is far too much *diablerie* in her composition to please me."

The girl looks satisfied, as she says,—

"Mr. Collison was a great friend of papa's, and when he was dying he wrote, praying him to give Hetty a home. It seems her father was a poor, shiftless creature, and she confessed last night she did not grieve much when he died. 'I shall get on better without him,' she said."

"That is a nice sentiment for a newly-orphaned girl to air! It is to be hoped she was not quite in earnest."

Suddenly the still sweet air is cleft by a gay voice singing clearly and jubilantly,—

"Pretty Dolly goes to keep a trysting

That she would not keep in sultry noon;

For e'en beauty has an added sweetness

'Neath a golden harvest moon!"

The lovers start apart as Hetty crosses the lawn swiftly and lightly. She is wearing flowing draperies of lace, which do duty for mourning, and she has fastened some scarlet and yellow exotics at her throat. Her hands are filled with roses, and the breeze playing about her, comes to Hero laden with their scent.

She sits down beside Hero, but addresses herself to Herbert Norman.

"This place is simply delightful!" she says, "so thoroughly conducive to romance. It has actually made me feel sentimental, and Hero's name is so deliciously suggestive of poetry and love."

"Tragic love," answers Miss Vyvash, with an attempt at playfulness. "The old Hero lost her Leander, you remember."

"Yes; but why on earth did she not console herself with another lover, instead of weeping, wailing, and gnashing her teeth?"

"That is what you would have done, Miss Collison?"

"Most decidedly, Mr. Norman. I should not have been so mad as to emulate my lover by drowning myself! Whilst my youth and beauty lasted I should have held my life dear. I always envy Helen of Troy, Ninon d'Enclos, and Cleopatra; they governed men so regally, and so long!"

"And they were all such good and worthy women," Herbert remarks, drily, "the sort of women who make excellent and chaste wives!"

Hetty laughs.

"Oh! I am shocking your pastoral innocence, and, really, I am so wicked as to delight in it. But," with a sudden pathetic lowering of eyes and voice, which Hero distrusts, "don't think I am quite so black as I paint myself. I have contracted a bad habit of magnifying my faults, until they appear crimes. You see I have such a wholesome hatred of *sham* goodness, that I fly to the opposite extreme!"

"A woman cannot be too careful of her words and actions!" Herbert says tersely; then adds, "Your roses are dying; would it not be best to place them in water?"

"Thanks for the reminder," as she rises—there is an audacious mirthfulness in her great black eyes—"I guess I am an intruder, after all. Oh! what devoted lovers you are!

You will persuade me against my will that the race of Darby and Joan is not yet extinct!"

"Why should it be?" Hero questions, her sweet voice grown sharp.

"Oh! the nineteenth century isn't favourable to their preservation!"

Hero and Herbert have risen, too, and now walk with her towards the house; suddenly she asks,—

"Hero, why is Mr. Vyvash a recluse? Why does he persistently avoid his neighbours?"

"How do you know that he avoids them?"

"He told me so, and of course I at once concluded he has a history! Some day, my dear, you shall tell it me!"

"I have nothing to tell," coldly. "Why should not my father prefer solitude for its own sake?"

"Because no man does. Modern hermits may be divided into two classes, the disappointed and the disgraced. And as Mr. Vyvash is an honourable man, he must belong to the first class!" and she shoots a disagreeably searching glance at Hero.

But the girl is unconscious of it, as she answers, quietly,—

"His past is a sealed book to me, but I believe my mother's death made him a recluse. He loved her so dearly!"

For a moment they stand together in the verandah; then Hetty enters the breakfast-room by the French window, and the lovers turn once more to the garden.

"I hate her!" Hero says, with all the vehemence of nineteen; "she is false and cruel!"

"Aren't you judging her a little too hastily and harshly? I grant she is not a model woman, but I think her flippancy is her greatest fault!"

Hurt and angry, that her lover should defend Hetty, Hero allows the subject to drop. But as the days lengthen into weeks, an unspoken antagonism grows up between the two girls, which on Hero's part is not lessened by her father's and Herbert's increasing partiality for Hetty.

The latter is one of those women who seem to drive all men mad with their beauty and their wiles. In an incredibly short time she has won Mr. Vyvash's confidence, invades his study at any hour of the day—a thing his own child has never dared to do—has begged Herbert's advice as to the course of study she should pursue; has won his pity by pathetic looks and speeches.

The gardener and page come under her sway; the one cuts his choicest blooms un-murmuringly for her, and the other fetches and carries for her, like an intelligent animal; and all are agreed that Hero's dislike and distrust of her are the outcome of jealousy. Her father has said gravely,—

"I am disappointed in you; I little thought you would grudge the poor girl a share of your home and your comforts."

Even Herbert remonstrates with her, and at times she wonders if she is wholly to blame.

One day, when Miss Collison has been at Anstey a month, a letter comes to Hero from the mother of an old friend, who writes praying her to go down to Walbourne without delay. The letter is short and pitiful, for the girl, who is dying of rapid decline, is her only child, and she is a widow.

Hero loses no time in putting some things together, and is feverishly anxious to start, although she dislikes the idea of leaving Hetty behind for an indefinite time. She telegraphs to Mrs. Ashwell to meet her at Walbourne Station the following morning, and that evening takes her last walk with Herbert through the dear familiar lanes, made sacred to her by his love.

Oh! never again will she walk there with him, secure and glad in his devotion; never any more will she see quite the same look in his eyes, hear quite the same note of tenderness in his voice. Why cannot she lie down this summer night and fall into that dreamless sleep from which there is no awakening? Why should she ever learn that

her idol has feet of clay? Henceforth she will know no moonlit hour which does not recall all the quivering past, with its passion and pain (for it is pain to part from him even for awhile) which does not call into quicker, crueller life the old love, and old longing which she knows are each so vain.

They lean upon a gate, and Herbert has an arm about her waist.

"I shall miss you awfully, you little winsome thing!" he says tenderly. "What magic have you used so to bewitch me—to make my days empty and incomplete without you? I think, Hero, no woman was ever loved so well as you."

She smiles up into his eyes.

"I sometimes wonder what you see in me to love. I am so awfully ordinary."

He laughs and removes her hat, passing his hand lightly and lovingly over her hair.

"What pretty hair it is!" he says. "I never saw any quite like it—all little waves and curls. I hate sleek-haired women. There is something so false about them."

Her heart gives an exultant throb, for Hetty is decidedly sleek-haired, and her fringe absolutely refuses to curl, despite her utmost efforts with tongs and paper.

"I am glad my hair is pretty," she says. "I have nothing else to redeem me from utter plainness."

"Have you not?" with a little glad laugh.

"Are you fishing for compliments? No? Well, shall I tell you how you look to me?"

"Yes; that will be delightful; but don't draw too largely on your flattery; the truth will not offend me."

"Well, I shall start with your eyes: just now they are grey as a November dawn, but they have a trick of changing colour. I have seen them blue as violets, and I have seen them black (but that was when you were in a rage. You're an awful spitfire, I'm afraid). Well, your face is a trifle too pale to please most folks, and a trifle too long to be oval. I don't believe there is a single perfect feature in it, but it makes a bewitching whole; your mouth is tantalising in the extreme, resolute, but most kissable. Perhaps your chin is a trifle too square, but I don't cavil at that; and the masses of hair about brow and cheeks are golden in the sunshine, brown in the shade. There, I have given you a judicious mixture of praise and disparagement. Are you content?"

"More than content! I believe you have called my latent vanity into life. Oh, Herbert! if you grew tired of me now my heart would break."

He catches her close to him—rains kisses on her.

"Sweet hands, sweet hair, sweet cheeks, sweet eyes, sweet mouth,

Rach singly wooed and won."

"I think," he says, whisperingly, "I love you the better that you were so hard to win; once I was half mad with my passion and fear. Oh, my darling! oh, my little darling! do you know what you are to me? I think if you were false I should go to the dogs utterly. When you come back to me (and how can I let you go, even for a day, an hour), we will coerce Mr. Vyvash into fixing an earlier date for our marriage. Ah, sweet! what a happy life yours shall be!"

Ah! what dreams they dreamed under that July moon; and now, were one curious to know the ending of their love, and with that purpose wandered in the old ways, one might well ask with the poet, "Where is she?" and, one answering, would reply, "She has joined the great army of betrayed and broken-hearted women, for he who swore so deeply to cherish her through all time has failed her."

Overhead the stars are shining, and the air is laden with delicate odours; close by a night-ingale is singing, and the grasshoppers chirp at their feet. Hero was glad in the beauty of amber sky and grey-green meadows, and with the confident, pathetic trust of youth, believed

her whole life would be one long sweet idyll. Poor child! poor child!

It is very late when they return to the house. It is so hard to say good-bye! Herbert has a thousand and one tender things to say—is as loth to free her from his embrace as she is to leave it.

The parting is for so short a time, but her heart is heavy with it, and the hot tears sting her eyelids, stain the pallor of her sweet, pure face. What prompts her to say, with his arms still about her, his kisses warm yet upon her mouth,—

"You will not let Hetty's beauty make you forget me? When I am away, will you question your heart why you should love so poor a creature as I?"

"Am I likely to change?" Herbert asks, in a quick, pained way. "Isn't it rather late in the day to begin doubting me?"

In a sudden access of remorse she bows her face upon his breast.

"I love you, I love you so!" she whispers; "let that be my answer."

A little later a voice calls "Hero! Hero! are you never coming in?" and with a last farewell kiss, one last tender look into his deep brown eyes, she turns herself from him, and hurriedly enters the room where her father and Hetty are sitting.

Hero had hoped to spend these last few hours alone with her father, but Hetty keeps her seat at the piano, and sings the songs she knows Mr. Vyvash loves best—songs wholly unsuitable to Hero's voice, which is a soprano, and a most very strong one. Hetty was a divine contralto.

Disappointed, uneasy, Miss Vyvash goes to her room, but does not fall asleep until early dawn, and then she is disturbed by unpleasant dreams, so that she is not sorry when Hetty wakes her with the words,—

"Hurry up, Hero! You have only an hour in which to dress, breakfast, and get to the station. Of course, Mr. Norman goes with you!"

"Yes," Hero answers, tumbling out of bed, and proceeding to dress hurriedly. "I wish you had called me before—I hate to be worried in this fashion."

But, after all, she is ready at the appointed time. Herbert drives up to the door in a dog-cart, and Hero turns to kiss her father good-bye.

She is painfully aware that he will miss her less than before, thanks to Hetty; even his parting words carry a sting with them,—

"Stay as long as you are useful to Mrs. Ashwell, my child; Hetty will take care of me."

Miss Collison is at this moment pinning a rose in Herbert's coat, and Hero asks, coldly, "Will she undertake to watch over Mr. Norman too?"

"Oh, dear, yes!" cries Hetty, unabashed. "I shall be happy to do so," flashing an arch glance at him. "You need have no anxiety about either."

Then Hero is assisted into her seat, the last good-byes have been spoken, and she is driven towards the minute station, which is the pride and boast of every native of Anstey.

The drive is not a cheerful one; Herbert is depressed, and Hero is disinclined for speech. But when they are on the platform he says, eagerly,—

"You will write me every other day?"

"Of course; I will keep a sort of journal for your benefit."

"And I hope you will find your friend so far recovered that your stay need be only a short one. The days will be horrible without you."

He selects a carriage for her in which is seated a pleasant-looking old lady; then the signal is given to start. Hero leans down to him,—

"My dear! my dear! good-bye—don't quite forget me."

A strong, close clasp of the hand, a flash of mutual passion in two pairs of eyes, and then she is carried away from him, and he stands

lonely on the deserted platform, wondering what a whole life would be like without her, when one hour is so cruel.

And when they meet again she will know that in some subtle way he has changed—that nothing will ever be the same to her any more. The long, long days of her living martyrdom will have cast their shadow all athwart her way.

CHAPTER II.

HERO has been absent from home three weeks, and in that time Hetty Collison has greatly improved her acquaintance with Herbert.

To-night they stand together by the gate, where he and Hero had so often loitered, and they speak in hushed tones, although their words are common-places.

"To-morrow," says Hetty, pathetically, "Hero will share your walk, be your chosen companion," and then her voice dies out tremulously.

The young man flashes a quick glance at her; he looks pale and haggard, and his eyes are miserable. "We shall not leave you out in the cold, Hetty," he says, putting a strong constraint upon himself; but she shrugs her shoulders.

"Hero hates me! I wonder why? I thought she would be sorry for me, because I am penniless and an orphan. I don't wish to blame her (I owe the Vyvashes too much for that), but my life would be better and happier if she would regard me more kindly!"

"She is a girl of few loves," Herbert answers, deprecatingly, "but you must try to believe that you are not unpleasant to her. I am quite sure she means no unkindness!"

"Perhaps not," mournfully, "but I know this, that I cannot remain in this house after her return. I shall look about for something to do. I cannot eat the bread of dependence!"

Herbert Norman stretches out his hand and lays it upon her clasped fingers. "Hetty," he says, hurriedly, "what do you purpose doing? What can you do?"

"I don't know," wearily, "but I am not altogether stupid. I suppose, if need were, I could learn some trade. I am not clever enough to teach, but I think I should do for the post of companion!"

"But have you thought of the drudgery, you poor child?" and his voice is a "thought too tender," his eyes a shade too passionate.

"Yes," she answers lowly, "I have thought it all out, and I see no other course open to me. I am all alone in the world. Oh!" bending her face upon her hands, "if my dear father had lived I had never fallen into such straits!"

He remembers the words Hero had repeated to him, and scarcely knows whether to believe them or not. Why should Hero lie about this beautiful girl, unless, indeed, she was jealous of her?

"I thought," he says, gently, "that Mr. Collison was a shiftless creature, rather a burden to you than otherwise!"

"Who dares say so?" she asks, lifting her head, passionately. "He was the kindest, best, most ill-used of all men," and suddenly hiding her face in her handkerchief she sobs aloud.

It is a fine piece of acting, and perfectly succeeds in blinding him.

"For Heaven's sake, forget my words," he says, earnestly; "I cannot bear your tears!"

She allows him to regain possession of her slender fingers, and for a moment lets her eyes rest upon his face with something in their dark depths that sets his heart throbbing tumultuously, only to sink faint and cold within him, as the thought comes to him, "What would Hero say to these moonlight confidences?"

He drops Hetty's hands.

"Let us go home," he says, in a harsh, constrained voice; and without a word she turns her face in the direction of Anstey Cottage.

On their way they pass Herbert's home. It

is a fine old building, and Hetty's eyes flash, as mentally she registers a vow that one day she will reign there as mistress.

"I am more fit to wear his name than Hero," she thinks, with supreme contempt for her pale rival. "How could he believe himself in love with that little Quaker!"

The following morning rises bright and clear, and, as Hero wakes, she whispers low down in her heart,—

"I shall see him to-day. Oh! thank Heaven, I shall see him to-day!"

Yet she is not altogether glad to leave Walborne, for since Lucy's death Mrs. Ashwell has clung to her with pathetic affection. In a quiet way Hero has relieved her of all the sad business of the funeral arrangements, has comforted her in all her affliction, has stood in the place of a daughter to the poor desolate woman whose whole life lays wrecked, whose heart is broken!

They say good-bye in the little garden, where Lucy had so often lingered, but where she will never linger any more!

"You will forgive me that I don't volunteer to see you off?" says Mrs. Ashwell, tearfully. "I am afraid I should break down on the platform. Oh child! child! it is so hard to let you go!"

She takes the sweet sympathetic face between her thin hands, and kisses it passionately, whilst the tears rain down her cheeks.

"You have been an angel to me, and I shall miss you cruelly. May Heaven reward you for all your goodness, and make your life a happier one than mine!"

Alas! alas! how fruitless her blessing was to prove.

The journey to Anstey is long and tedious, but it comes to an end at last. The sun is fast setting when the train creeps along the little platform, and almost before it has come to a stand Hero springs out, and lays her little fluttering hand in Herbert's.

What is it that chills her to the heart, and drives the faint bloom from her face? His manner is kind, but there is something of tenderness gone from it, and she who loves him so well readily detects this.

But no word of reproach or query passes her lips; in silence she allows him to assist her into the dog-cart; in silence they perform the first part of their journey. Then he turns to her.

"You must come over early to-morrow. My mother is literally mad with delight at the prospect of seeing you."

"And are you glad to have me back again?" she questions, timidly.

"Of course I am. Why, Hero, what has come to you that you should need assurance of my love?" and, stooping, he kisses her once upon the mouth.

She shivers and grows sick with fear. Surely she misses some warmth in his kiss. And why will he so avoid her look? In a changed and cold voice she asks,—

"And is my father well?"

"Remarkably! I have never seen him so cheerful as he has been lately."

A lump rises in her throat.

"Then he has not missed me?"

"Well, of course, it was not so lonely for him, as it once would have been. Hetty is a very lively companion."

"You have made advances," Hero says, trying to speak lightly. "When I left home you spoke of her as Miss Collison."

"Oh! I look on her as a sort of relation, and I have seen her every day for the past three weeks."

"And did she console you in my absence?" with poor playfulness.

He glances coldly down at her.

"You are positively jealous; pray believe neither Miss Collison nor I would wrong you."

"You are jumping at conclusions," the girl retorts swiftly. "Why should you misconstrue an innocent question?"

"It sounded strangely. There, don't look so grieved, Hero; I have no doubt you spoke thoughtlessly."

Thus he with manly magnanimity; and she answers pleadingly, her heart grown sick with dread,—

"Herbert, tell me I am as much to you as when we said good-bye?"

"Why will you torment yourself and me with foolish doubts?" he answers. With the sound of her sweet young voice yet fresh in his ears—with her tender, pale face lifted to his, he cannot tell her the ghastly truth—he cannot say, "You have become wearisome to me. Your love is no longer a boon I crave; let me go free."

Alas! poor child, she is so confident in his honour; so easily satisfied. She lifts one little tremulous hand, and touches his face.

"You have been ill. Oh, my poor darling! you have been ill!" and she does not understand what has brought lines upon his brow, and about his mouth.

He laughs constrainedly.

"I was never better in my life, you anxious little soul. But the heat takes it out of one."

Now they bowl along the broad drive, and Herbert brings the horse up smartly in front of the pretty verandah. Hero, disdainful assistance, springs to the ground, and flies to her father's side.

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" she cries, passionate love and entreaty in her voice. "Say you have missed me a little; say you wanted me back?"

"Of course I missed you, child; but, thanks to Hetty, my days have not been so dull as I anticipated," and, stooping, he kisses her brow.

She falls back from him, a trifle paler than before, and Hetty comes forward with a smile.

Have you forgotten my existence, Hero? Why, how pale and wan you are! Your visit has certainly not been good for you."

"You forget I have witnessed much trouble since I left home."

"Oh, yes, of course. Poor Lucy Ashwell! Her death must be a dreadful blow to her mother. Don't you think Mr. Vyvash is looking exceptionally well? I can assure you I have taken the utmost care of him!"

"I hope you have extended your maternal care to Mr. Norman?" Hero remarks drily. "He is certainly not looking very robust."

"We attribute that to grief for your absence," with a covert sneer. "He should look quite a Philistine, for I have prevailed upon him to be my companion in all my long rambles. At harvest-time it is not quite a safe thing for girls to walk alone."

And with these words ringing in her ears Hero goes miserably up to her own room, feeling almost a stranger in her home. She has scarcely changed her dress when she hears the gong sound for dinner, and runs down hastily to take her old place at the head of the table. To her surprise she finds it already occupied by Hetty, who says, with a sweet smile,—

"I thought I would spare you all fatigue, my dear; you have had such a terrifically long journey."

Her heart is bursting with anger, and her keen sense of injustice; but pride holds her silent. If father and lover elect she should hold a secondary place in the household, why should she complain?

Inch by inch Hetty gains upon her old ground, pushes her from the field; quietly contests her position in the house, until Hero gives up the unequal struggle, and sinks into a mere cypher whilst yet she bears the name of mistress.

One morning the girls pay a visit to Mrs. Norman; the old lady is delighted to see Hero, but her face grows cold as she looks at Hetty, and her tone is icy. A man would wonder at the distinction she makes between her visitors; would ask himself how she can pass over Hetty's wondrous beauty for Hero's paler charms. But Mrs. Norman is a shrewd woman, and sees below the surface.

"What a horrid old woman she is!" Hetty says, as soon as they have left the house behind them. "I positively hate her."

"You had best not let Mr. Norman hear

you say so, for he is old-fashioned enough to love and reverence his mother."

Before Hetty can reply a man appears through a gap in the hedge, disreputable in appearance, bold and swaggering, his face burnt brown by exposure to sun and air, yet with something about him that speaks of better days.

"Can you tell me where Edwin Vyvash lives?" he asks, with a glance of insolent admiration at Hetty. "I've been told his diggings are somewhere in this lively hole."

"This is Miss Vyvash," Hetty says quickly; "she will give you all necessary information," and she glances swiftly from one to the other. But Hero wears an unconscious expression, and she is disappointed.

"Are you his girl?" questions the man, turning to Hero.

Courage is not her cardinal virtue, and this fellow's appearance alarms her. Her voice is very faint, as she says, "Yes; what is your business with my father?"

"He wouldn't thank me to tell you," with a brutal laugh. "I've heard he keeps no company, sees no strangers. Is that true?"

"Yes."

"I'll take care he sees me, though. Look here, you shall carry my message to him. Say Charles Ingram has found him out, and intends seeing him, whether he will or no."

Stung to anger by his insolence, Hero flashes upon him. "I shall take no such message. If you come on a begging errand your impertinence is hardly likely to gain you assistance, and if you mean to extort money by threats you lay yourself open to the law."

"I've come on no begging errand," with an oath. "I only ask my due, and I don't mean to leave Anstey until I get it."

Hetty interposes again. "My good fellow, you should know it is scarcely good form to swear before ladies. If Mr. Vyvash owes you anything, rest assured he will pay you in full."

"That's spoken fairly," with coarse familiarity. "Are you another daughter? I thought he had one only."

"I am merely a friend," she says, quietly; "but I will deliver your message."

"Thank you, miss; you know an educated man when you meet one," and he glances menacingly at Hero, who has walked to a little distance; then he lifts his voice for her benefit,—

"It would be wiser, Miss Vyvash, if you treated your father's friend with civility; you ought to know pride goes before a fall."

The girl forgets all her fear then, and looks into the furtive eyes with such quiet contempt that they quail before her.

"I don't care who or what you are," she says, in cold, clear tones, "but I am certain you were never my father's friend; he consorts only with gentlemen."

He bursts into a loud, coarse laugh.

"Things are changed. Ask him where he first met Charles Ingram, and who were his sole companions for five years?"

"Come away, Hetty; this man is beneath notice," and Hero walks slowly on, unconscious of the dark looks that follow her.

Hetty does not come up with her until she has reached the verandah; then she says, "You must have been mad to defy that fellow as you did; for aught you know to the contrary he may be in possession of some unpleasant secret."

"There is nothing dark or secret in my father's life," coldly.

Hetty smiles disagreeably.

"Well, it will be wiser to carry Ingram's message to Mr. Vyvash, as he intends coming up here at eight this evening. I daresay I shall find him in the study."

"Thanks for the interest you take in this matter," sarcastically; "but I could not allow you to trouble yourself. I will perform this unpleasant duty," and she goes at once to the study.

As she enters, her father glances up.

"I thought it was Hetty," he says; "it is quite a new thing for you to beard me in my den. What do you want, my dear?"

She sits beside him and tells him of her adventure, and gradually she sees his face grow livid and his eyes wild.

With a sudden passionate gesture he puts her from him, and bowing his head upon the table, groans bitterly.

"Father! father!" she entreats, kneeling beside him, "what power has this man over you? Why are you so terribly afraid? There is no reason why you should see him—"

"I must see him," he interrupts, wildly; "you don't know what his coming means for me!"

"Then tell me, dear. See, I am strong to bear anything for your sake," and her pale face is suddenly glorified by love and devotion.

But, weak and trembling as a little child, he still persists in thrusting her away.

"Leave me! leave me!" he cries, impatiently, "I am best alone."

"But surely I may share your trouble, dear?" she entreats; "try me, and see if I will fail you now. Whatever may come I will not flinch—I will prove myself worthy to be your child."

The door opens, and Hetty enters.

Hero springs to her feet.

"Are we not safe even here?" she questions, fiercely. "Am I never to spend a quiet hour with my father?"

"I beg your pardon," humbly. "I thought you were in your room."

Mr. Vyvash lifts his white and stricken face for a moment, and addresses Hetty,—

"I shall be glad to be alone," he says, plaintively. "The news Hero brought has upset me. Ingram is connected with a very troubled part of my life; he is quite cognizant of my distresses. I knew him about the time my wife died."

"You are more fortunate than some men, Mr. Vyvash," Hetty says, with her hand upon the door; "you have known only distress—some have been companions with disgrace."

Her voice is caressing, but in her eyes there is a look of malicious triumph as she turns away.

Hero goes wearily to her room, and shuts herself in.

"What is this mystery?" she questions, again and again, whilst her heart complains bitterly. "He could offer her some explanation, but he did not think it necessary to enlighten my ignorance. Oh, my dear! my dear! is she to have all your love and trust?"

CHAPTER III.

THE clock in the hall has just struck eight when Charles Ingram makes his appearance. Mr. Vyvash has given orders for his admission, so that the servant who conducts him to the study can only show his disapproval by openly contemptuous glances at his attire and general air. Once inside the study, the swaggering manner he adopts with all who are too weak to defy him increases; he plants his back against the door and looks triumphantly down at his victim, who gazes appealingly up at him.

"So I've found you again, my boy, although you thought you'd given me the slip!" he says. "By Jingoo, you look sixty, and you can't be much over forty! A conscience is an uncomfortable thing."

"What do you want?" Mr. Vyvash asks feebly. "Why could you not write instead of coming here?"

"Because I didn't intend to lose sight of you again, my friend," in a bullying tone. "You would be cutting off to some other nice rural spot, and changing your name again."

"Hush, don't speak so loudly; you will be heard."

"Well, if I am, what then? Have I anything to lose?"

"Perhaps not, but I have."

"Just so. I'm glad you take such a sensible

view of the case. Of course you figure here as 'the gentle hermit,' the man whose life is so pure from reproach that you are held up as an example to your neighbours."

"No! no!" earnestly. "I have nothing to do with the outside world; I said good-bye to it years ago. Ingram, how much do you want to keep my secret?"

Ingram looked at him artfully, and instead of answering his question, says,—

"Is that pale-faced wench who was so saucy your child? The other one said she was, but women are such liars."

"Yes, what of that?"

"Does she know anything of your past life, my friend?"

"Heaven forbid!"

"Well, now the mere fact that she is ignorant of your little slip makes my knowledge all the more valuable. I did think of asking a nice sum down, but now I see my way to a snug annuity and a comfortable home. Your quarters aren't bad, but they are decidedly dull; still I'll soon alter that."

"What do you mean?" Mr. Vyvash asks tremulously.

"Why, nothing more or less than this," answers Ingram, bringing his hand heavily down upon the table. "You shall pay me a certain sum quarterly (we will decide on the amount presently), and I shall remain here as a permanent member of the family."

Mr. Vyvash starts to his feet, looking younger and nobler in his sudden wrath.

"You are mad!" he cries. "Do you suppose for an instant I would countenance your presence here—would allow you to sit down with my daughter?"

"I shouldn't harm her," the other retorts, coolly. "Is her name so stainless that she can afford to be proud with me? Look here, Vyvash—and I give you your new name out of sheer kindness—you had better be reasonable; unless you are, I'll make things uncomfortable for you, and this place too hot to hold you. I'll go to your girl and tell her all I know of you. Do you think she will be quite so fond and proud of you then?" and leaning forward he peers into the other man's face with his furtive, blood-shot eyes.

Mr. Vyvash sinks into his chair like one cowed, and Ingram goes on,—

"I don't want to drive you too hard; but I'm a man of my word, and I shan't go from my proposal."

"But for Hero to meet you daily!" in accents of horror.

"She might do worse."

"You forget what your crime was. Man-slaughter is an ugly word, and your victim was a helpless woman."

"Pooh!" says Ingram, "it was all an accident, and she was a provoking jade. The worst fault I ever committed was marrying her. But come to the point," with would-be persuasiveness. "Do you agree to my proposal?"

"I suppose I must," in a low, stricken tone; "but have you no mercy? I will double the price of your silence if you will only go away from here."

"But I tell you I won't. I've made up my mind to reform. With your help I intend getting into society. Who knows but that I shall end by marrying a county belle. I might do worse than take your daughter."

"Silence!" thunders Mr. Vyvash; "this is more even than I can bear."

Outside a woman is stooping, her ear placed against the keyhole. What is this secret Ingram holds? she asks herself again and again. By fair or foul means she will be in possession of it, and then let Hero look to herself.

So absorbed is she in her occupation that she does not hear a light swift step along the passage, and starts when a hand is laid upon her shoulder, and a voice says coldly,—

"What are you doing here?"

She lifts herself erect, and looks down at Hero with grave reproach in her eyes.

"You think I am listening out of sheer

curiosity, but you are mistaken. I heard angry voices, and thought Mr. Vyvash called for help, so I ran here."

"And thought, if assistance were needed, you could give it by remaining outside? Really, Miss Collison, you credit me with too large a belief in you."

"I know," says Hetty, still speaking in a whisper, "you misconstrue every word and deed of mine. One day you will regret your harshness."

"If that day ever comes," Hero answers, scornfully, "I will make you all the amendment in my power;" then, without knocking, she opens the door and enters. "Father, Hetty said you called. Did you want me?"

"No, no, my dear!" he says hurriedly, not daring to look at her; "go away. Mr. Ingram and I have business matters to settle, and—and—he will remain here to-night."

Hero opens her eyes wide upon the stranger, takes in at a glance the shabby frayed garments, the unwashed, unshaven bloated face, the general air of viciousness, and then says, quietly,—

"The servants' rooms are full. Perhaps he can be accommodated at the 'Green Man.'"

"Mr. Ingram is my guest," answers the unhappy man, "and, as such, you will do your best to amuse him during his stay. He may find it convenient to remain here a few days."

The girl bows, and walks quietly away, offering no apology to Ingram for what her father terms her mistake. Her heart feels cold and dead within her. A terrible sense of fear has settled upon her, which, try as she will, she cannot shake off.

She goes back to the drawing-room, where Hetty is now entertaining Herbert. He lifts his eyes as his betrothed enters. She is looking very pale and worn, being one of those women who lose flesh and bloom by an hour's sickness or anxiety.

Mentally, he contrasts her with Miss Collison, who is unusually brilliant. There is an exquisite bloom on her dark cheek, a great light in her marvellous eyes.

What wonder if he is dissatisfied with his choice—this poor, pale little flower no other man has cared to gather for himself?

And to-night she so longs for a kindly word—a loving look; but Herbert is constrained, and she is too proud to beg favour or notice.

In the morning, when she goes down, she finds Charles Ingram already seated at table, and doing ample justice to the breakfast. Hetty, who sits opposite, is laughing and chatting with him gaily.

With a contemptuous glance round, Hero turns to leave the room, addressing the maid as she does so.

"Serve my breakfast in my own room; and so long as Mr. Ingram remains I shall not come down."

Ingram lifts his eyes to the pure, pale face, the proud little figure standing in the doorway. Then he brings his fist heavily down upon the table.

"I'll bring your pride down yet!" he says, with an oath. "I'll make matters the reverse of comfortable for old Vyvash. I'll—"

"Pray spare your threats; they do not alarm me," and so she leaves them.

Then Hetty dismisses the maid, and crosses to Ingram. She lays her hand upon his shoulder with a familiarity that startles even him.

"You are going to tell me what hold you have upon Mr. Vyvash?" she says, insinuatingly.

He laughs coarsely.

"Is it likely? What value will my secret be to me if I share it with others?"

"I will not make any market out of it; I am only curious."

"You've a motive for wishing to know," he answers, cunningly. "Look here, Miss Collison; you're a deuced handsome girl, and I'd like to oblige you if I could; but you're as poor as I am, and I can't have you poaching on my preserves."

She leans a little nearer.

"I will be frank with you," she says, with a bewildering smile. "I hate Hero Vyvash with all my heart. You see what she is; she treats me with the same contempt that she lavishes on you. I want to have such power over her as you have over that drivelling old dotard, her father. Come, why should you be selfish? Let me share your secret, and I swear I won't divulge it to any other."

She looks so beautiful, so enticing; she leans so near that he is sick with the scent of her robes—the roses at her breast.

"I guess you're a Delilah," he says, huskily, "but for the life of me I can't deny you anything. I'll make a clean breast of it to you, only I want a reward," and she almost shivers away from him—there is such sudden wild passion in his eyes.

"What is it? If it is in my power to give, believe you have it already," she says, and hides her loathing of him well.

"One kiss!" he entreats, "only one. Hetty, I'm like water in your hands, and I've known you something else than a day."

A moment she stands irresolute, then she answers,—

"You shall have your wish. I promise. Now tell me all."

"Bend down; it's madness to talk too loudly about this matter."

Then he whispers a few words in the girl's ear. She starts, flushes hotly, whilst a look of malignant triumph makes her face demonic; then with a little low laugh she kisses him lightly upon the mouth, saying,—

"I am eternally grateful to you. See, each can help the other; let us clasp hands and swear comradeship."

He takes the slender fingers in his great red palm, and looks into her flashing eyes with passionate admiration.

"You're a woman after my own heart; and together we ought to feather our own nests pretty well. And if you'll only give me a little hope, I should be quite another sort of fellow."

"What do you mean by giving you hope?" she questions with difficulty, keeping her anger and loathing under control.

"What does a man mean when he talks to a woman like that, Miss Collison? Hetty, you're the loveliest and most bewitching woman I have ever met, and, upon my honour, I love you!"

"I am flattered!" she says, curtseying to him, "but, really, I don't see how you could maintain a wife. You are penniless, and, pardon me, your character is not one that will bear inspection."

"But old Vyvash must allow me a good income, and no one need know anything of my past."

"I haven't much faith in such sudden attachments, and, of course, you must understand that poor as I am, I am still a lady, whilst you originally were—"

"A merchant's clerk," sullenly.

"Just so; and you found a difficulty in distinguishing between your master's goods and your own. It isn't an uncommon failing by any means. Now, don't scowl so horribly, because I have only spoken the truth, and I am not a coward, like the girl upstairs."

She glances out of the window as she speaks, and seeing Herbert crossing the lawn, says,— "I must leave you to your own devices for a short time; you will find the victim in the study."

So she steps out into the verandah, smiling pensively, and gives her hand to Mr. Norman, allows it to rest a thought too long in his, then says,—

"I am afraid you will have to be content with my society for a short time. Hero is with her father engaged in an earnest conversation (from which I am excluded). I am afraid—oh! terribly afraid, some calamity has fallen upon Mr. Vyvash; that at some time in his life he put himself in the power of the man Ingram. Certain it is that the latter is levying black-mail."

Herbert's sallow face flushes; pride is his great failing, and Hetty knows this.

"I hope to Heaven he has done nothing disgraceful. Of course, if it were so, I should not think less of Hero, but I should certainly prefer my wife's name should be as stainless as my own."

"Yes; you are naturally proud of your race!" softly. "Poor Hero! she has such perfect faith in her father that to find any flaw in him would almost break her heart. I fear that she is not wholly ignorant of coming trouble, she looks so pale and wan this morning. Isn't it curious what an effect an hour's illness or worry has upon her?" and she lifts sympathetic lovely eyes to his.

"She is a girl who feels acutely," Herbert answers, constrainedly; then suddenly he catches Hetty's hands in his, and draws her quite close to him. "Hetty," he says hoarsely, "Hetty! What shall we do with our lives?"

She will not look at him now; but the ice is broken, and he goes on passionately,—

"That I love you, you know; and I am tempted to believe you are not indifferent to me! Oh, if I had been less rash, if I had but waited until I was sure of my devotion to Hero! Hetty, my darling Hetty! I have forged such chains as cannot be broken! I have laid waste all my own life. Heaven grant I have not spoiled yours."

She throws herself on his breast, sobbing and clinging to him. It is an awful moment for the man; he loves her with such mad, blind passion, that the touch of her hands makes him sick and faint, and all his soul cries out for freedom to woo this most lovely and loving woman.

"Pity me, pity me!" she wails; "your compassion is all I dare ask—all I deserve, for I have given you my heart unsought; have allowed you to learn the secret which is also my shame."

Then again she is silent, whilst he madly kisses her, and calls her by sweet endearing names, that once were Hero's only.

The world grows brighter, the birds sing more loudly, the air is rich with the odour of flowers. Surely, in such a paradise, with the woman he loves, he may snatch a brief hour of unalloyed happiness.

But suddenly a voice cries,—

"Herbert! Herbert!"

With a swift gesture he puts Hetty aside, and goes to meet Hero.

She is very pale and grave; there is no longer any loveliness in eye or face, and her step is heavy.

Two months ago he would have been filled with passionate anxiety for her; but now he is only conscious of distaste for her society, and annoyance at her jaded appearance.

Hetty has contrived to disappear through the thick-growing bushes, and as Hero joins him Herbert places his arm lightly about her waist—an old habit—and asks, not without some sharpness,—

"How long is that cad to be your guest?"

"I cannot say," with an air of utter weariness, "but I have an idea that he has some claim upon my father's gratitude. If it were not so, he would most certainly have been ejected long ago."

"Well, he is a curious acquaintance for a gentleman; but I suppose Mr. Vyvash understands his own affairs."

She glances swiftly into his face—the face so changed and cold now—then she looks down a little paler, a little wearier, with that awful dread tearing at her heart-strings.

She is not sorry when Herbert declares he must go; she rather seeks to hasten than retard his departure—the meeting has been so unsatisfactory, his manner so cold.

As he holds her hand lightly in his, she says, carelessly,—

"Had you been long here when I joined you?"

"Not very," with a sudden contraction of the brows; "why do you ask?"

"Because papa told me you were here, and I had missed Hetty from the house. Was she with you?"

He drops the little chill hand.

"Yes. Am I to be treated to another ebullition of jealousy?"

"No," quietly and coldly, "I have no wish to offend you. Are you coming up to-night? You will find me with papa in the study."

So they part without a word of tenderness, without an embrace or caress. The man goes his way to dream of the beautiful girl who is making him traitor to his word, and Hero goes back to her room to spend the long hours in bitter anguish of soul.

CHAPTER IV.

Hero dines alone, and when she has finished her poor little meal, sits in her room listening for the first sound of Herbert's footsteps.

Suddenly the door opens, and Hetty enters without ceremony.

"What are you doing here, sitting like an owl in the twilight?" she questions, sharply, and there is an unpleasant note of command in her voice.

"I am not answerable to you for all my vagaries," coldly; "but I will not sit down with the creature who seems to find such favour in your eyes. Hetty, how can you so far forget what is due to yourself as to cry 'Hail, fellow!' to Charles Ingram?"

Hetty laughs shortly.

"It would be better for you if you showed him less animosity, seeing that he holds your happiness and honour alike in his hand."

"What do you mean?" and through her voice there runs a tremor as of fear.

"That if you love your father (as you profess to do) you will not make him more miserable than he is now. Ingram is not a merciful man, and for every insult he receives he will give double."

"But what has placed us in his power?"

"Your father's sin!" Hetty answers, with cruel distinctness.

Hero springs to her feet.

"You don't know what you are saying," she cries, hoarsely. "How dare you bring any accusation against him? Do you forget all you owe him?"

Hetty's lip curls scornfully.

"Am I likely to forget my debts? Do you expect me to be grateful for grudging charity? Hero Vyvash, many and many a time I have winced under your words; you have despised me, hated me, distrusted me; but it is my day now. I, at least, am the child of an honourable man. You are a felon's daughter."

The girl falls against the wall, her hands pressed hard upon her breast; in the dim light her face gleams forth grey and rigid; her eyes are dark with unutterable woe. Once, twice, she essays to speak, but her tongue refuses to obey her will, and Hetty's triumph momentarily increases.

"At present your father's past is known only to Ingram and myself; but of course Herbert must be told, and then do you suppose he or his haughty mother will seek an alliance with you? Why, even the name you wear is not your own—you are Hero Wentworth, and your father is a forger."

"Oh, you lie to me! You lie to me!" wails the other. "What have I ever done to you that my calamity should be your joy? Let me pass. I am going to my father!"

Hetty stands aside holding her skirts close lest Hero's dress should brush against them. With swift uncertain steps the unhappy girl flies downstairs and towards the library.

Her father is alone, and looks up with a wan smile as she enters; then, seeing her face, covers his own and groans aloud. He had hoped and prayed she should never learn his crime, and now all his prayers are made void, all his schemes frustrated.

Hero flings herself down at his feet, and hiding her face upon his knees, sobs out,—

"Oh, my dear! oh, my dear! say it is not true. Do not break my heart. Tell me she lied."

"My child!" (how broken and feeble his

voice is!) "My child, I cannot tell you this. Oh! look up, look up! Say that your unhappy father has not lost your love with your belief."

He is sobbing like a child, and her tender heart is touched with passionate pity for him. She lifts herself, and draws down his head to her level; as yet she has no words with which to comfort him; her heart is beating heavily, her brain is in a whirl.

Who is she that she dare lift her eyes to Herbert—dare aspire to being his wife? Will he look on her with changed eyes when he knows (as of course he must) the sad, sad story of her father's crime? Will not Madame Norman, as the villagers call the stately old lady, thrust her away in angry scorn?

"Child! child! Why are you so silent?" pleads the broken voice. "Heaven knows I have tried to make your life happy; to keep all shadows from your path."

"Yes, yes!" she interrupts, wildly. "You have been always generous, always good—always my dear father. Oh, come close! Clasp my hands in yours whilst I tell you all you are to me; whilst I swear to love you more, not less, to do my poor best to help you in your affliction."

Like one gone mad with joy to find her unchanged he kisses her wan-white face and pale lips; clasps her closer to his breast, and so holds her whilst she fights fiercely for composure.

"Who told you the dreadful truth?" he asks at length; "but, of course, it was Ingram!"

"No; Hetty is in his confidence. She told me. Oh, father! how many times have I implored you to trust her less? I don't mean to reproach you, but if she had never come here we should have been happier!"

"What else could I do? She is an orphan, and so beautiful that it would have been unwise to place her with unknown people. Hero, are you fretting about Herbert? You poor child, you need have small fear concerning him; he shall never learn my secret. I can square matters with Ingram, and, for gratitude's sake, Hetty will be silent."

"Oh!" bitterly. "You do not read her character aright. She hates us both. You, because she owes you so much; me, because I distrust her! And, my dear, do you believe I can deceive Herbert? Whatever follows he must be told. I will not go to him with a load upon my conscience!"

"It must be as you will," wearily. "Loving you he will be merciful to me. The young are more generous than the old. Hero," and his voice sinks lower yet, "you have asked me nothing yet."

"I am content to wait, my dear, until you choose to speak."

Perhaps he longs for sympathy, perhaps the years of silence have been so irksome that he is glad to unbosom to her; or it may be he hopes in some measure to excuse his crime to this one creature, who will love him but the more for his sin and suffering.

Hero sits at his feet; his hands are laid caressingly upon the bowed brown head.

"You don't remember your mother, child; how should you? You were scarcely two months old when she died. Her malady was 'a broken heart.'"

He pauses, and his eyes grow dim as he remembers the tender, loving young wife, who had drooped and died alone and in poverty.

"My name is Wentworth. I was the only son of an eccentric and autocratic gentleman, and he mapped out a great career for me. As I grew up he showed great pride in, but never love for me; and, consequently, I regarded him with a feeling of awe."

"I was sent to Eton, and from thence to Oxford; and at the latter place I met your mother. She was the daughter of a small tradesman, but by education and feeling a lady. We became acquainted through an accident, and afterwards I used to play her. Finally, I went to her father and asked

permission to address her. This he refused unless my friends would sanction our engagement, and he wrote to my father, laying the whole matter before him.

"The result was that I was at once removed from Oxford, and given to understand that if I persisted in my folly my father would disown me. I laughed at the threat, because, although he was not compelled to make me any allowance, I knew at his death the whole property must revert to me; and surely, in the meanwhile, I could gain a decent livelihood for Edith and myself."

"I waited in apparent submission until quarter-day, when I drew my last allowance; then I went down to Oxford, and by dint of persuasions induced Edith to marry me secretly."

"After the ceremony we went to her home, and I never saw anything so awful as her father's rage, her mother's cold contempt. Swore she should never see either again, carried her off to London."

"Then I set myself to find work; but week after week passed by, and I had not obtained so much as a day's employment. It seemed that my education (complete as I believed it) was totally unfitted to help me. I knew nothing of book-keeping, consequently could not take a clerkship; and when I applied for the post of usher, I was met by the question—Why had I not taken my degree? No one who was not a B.A. need aspire to the dignity of under-master."

"I began to despair; my little stock of money was dwindling rapidly. I had no means of obtaining more, and Edith was in a delicate condition."

"I humbled my pride and wrote to my father, praying his assistance. My letter was returned to me torn in halves. Then Edith applied to her friends, but received no response, and things grew desperate."

"We had been married eleven months when you were born, and it drove me well-nigh mad to know my wife wanted the commonest necessities; and in my madness I committed my crime."

"I forged the name of an old college friend. The forgery was so clumsily executed that it was immediately discovered, and I was arrested. In the days of my Oxford life I had often assisted this man pecuniarily—he had since come into a fortune—but he forgot past benefits, and hounded me down."

Mr. Vyvash pauses, and his daughter's arms steal about his neck, her tender lips are laid on his.

A sob breaks from his tortured heart.

"You do not hate me, Hero?"

"No, no! I love you the more for your suffering," she answers, softly, and then he takes up the thread of his story once more.

"My crime killed your mother. She did not live to hear my sentence; and as she lay dying, our landlady—a good woman and motherly—offered to take you and treat you as her own until I was released. Well, I went to Dartmoor for five years, and in the meantime Edith died, and was buried by the parish, and you were growing up a little toddling child, acquainted already with poverty and grief. At Dartmoor I first met Ingram, and, in a moment of dreadful desolation, confided my whole story to him."

"I will not dwell upon that part of my life; I have hurt you too much already. The day came when I was once more free, and I travelled down to my own home, full of hatred towards my father, vowing to revenge my sufferings upon him. I found the house closed and empty—he was dead, and I, the felon—the outcast—was heir to his wealth. I sold the property at the earliest possible date, and returned to town to take possession of you."

"I placed you at school, and, as my old friend (the landlady) was anxious to join her relatives in Australia, I paid her passage out, and then started for America, where I remained three years. When I returned, I was so changed that even you did not recognize

me—sorrow had done its work well; I was broken down and old before I was thirty.

"From the date of my return you know all there is to know—my lonely life, my dread of society. Oh, child! oh, child! thank Heaven you can never know my sufferings; the burden of my sin will never rest on you. Edwin Wentworth is dead, and Edwin Vyvash fills his place. Never fear, Hero, we will weather the storm; even at the cost of half my fortune Ingram shall be silenced, and, for her own sake, Hetty will be secret. It rests with yourself whether or no Herbert shall be told this thing; but, my dear, be advised by me."

"No, no; I must tell him all, and throw myself on his mercy," she answers wearily, and as one spent with long toil. "If his heart fails him, if his love is weaker than his pride, if I am less to him than his honourable name, why, then he shall be free. Oh! at whatever cost to me, he must be made glad."

"Think again, Hero. Remember that men are selfish—that to lose him would be to lose all the happiness from your life, and that—

'Where ignorance is bliss
'Tis folly to be wise.'

She shakes her head mournfully.

"I will not deceive him," she says, gently; "and, dear, if he loves me half so well as I do him, he will not let this come between us. He will rather pity you. See where you fell; he, too, might fall under like temptation. When he thinks of those five long years of pain and shame his heart will bleed for you."

Mr. Vyvash is doubtful of the effect Hero's disclosure will have upon her lover, but he cannot dash her hope to the ground, or bring deeper shadows into those dark grey eyes.

How pale and wan she is! He remembers that his wife looked thus when she was torn away from him; and, with a groan, he prays "Heaven grant my child's life may be happier than hers!"

Oh! well for him, and for the silent girl, the future is a sealed book to them!—that they cannot see the long and lonely way which stretches out through the slow, dark years to come.

Suddenly Hero starts up. She has heard Ingram's unsteady step along the passages; and now she stands (her hands laid lovingly upon her father's shoulders) waiting the coming of her *bête noir*.

He enters noisily, and one glance at his flushed face is sufficient to show he has been drinking freely. With a lurch he comes close to the girl, and looks into her eyes with tipsy solemnity.

"So you won't break bread with me, you pale-faced jade?" he says; and she, not flinching, answers,—

"I am averse to the society of rogues!"

"What!" yells Ingram; "say it again!"

Quietly she repeats her words, and he lifts his hand threateningly. Mr. Vyvash hastily interposes.

"Touch her if you dare!" he cries, his voice trembling with rage. "I am the elder, but I will give you such a sound thrashing as shall prostrate you for weeks!"

"Tell her not to aggravate me," the other answers, suddenly. "What fellow could stand her gibes and sneers? I'm willing enough to be friends. Shake hands, Miss Wentworth," and he puts out a dirty hand, which she regards with ineffable contempt.

"I am not a hypocrite!" she answers shortly, and turns away.

He looks frowningly at her, then says,—

"I've business to discuss with your father that is unfit for a lady's ears; perhaps you will leave us?"

"Not until Mr. Vyvash requests me to do so!"

"Go, dear!" his father whispers; "your staying will not improve matters," and she moves towards the door in obedience to his wish.

Ingram opens it, and as she is passing out leans near,—

"Think over what I said. I won't be hard

on you if you'll treat me as you should. Come, kiss and be friends."

His hated face is close to hers; his hot, foul breath makes her sick and faint. With a sudden accession of passion she lifts her hand, and strikes him smartly across the mouth. He staggers back, purple with rage and surprise, but he does not venture to touch her.

"You saw that, Wentworth!" he says, with an oath. "Perhaps you'll put a stop to it, for I'm hanged if I stand her nonsense any longer!"

With a glance of contempt Hero disappears and hurries away to her own room, to brood over her troubles, to strive madly for the courage to endure any and every evil yet to come.

She is almost glad that Herbert absents himself from the Cottage; she is scarcely in the mood to meet any creature to-night; heart and head alike are aching, and a dreadful fear is on her that the idol she has so long worshipped, that she will love until she dies, will fall as others have done—will prove, after all, to have feet of clay.

She tries to think what life would be to her without his love, and cries aloud,—

"Oh, better death than loss of him! Oh, Heaven! spare me that calamity!" and falls to weeping bitterly.

The night wears by; the long, slow night fraught with tears and agonising thought. The chill, grey dawn comes at last, and with it new courage, new hope, new powers of endurance.

Hero dings open her window and leans out. She is worn with conflict; her eyes are heavy and sunken, and little lines of pain show upon the broad, white brow, about the tender, resolute mouth.

She seems to have lost all her little claim to prettiness; her youth is suddenly changed to age. Will she be less fair to Herbert now? Oh, Heaven! help the poor child if she finds no favour in his eyes—if contrasting her with her rival he shall hold the latter dearest and best!

She goes down to breakfast, and with a sad, new dignity takes her seat once more at the head of the table, much to Hetty's disgust.

CHAPTER V.

EVENING comes again, but Herbert has not yet appeared; all day Hero has waited for him, and her heart has grown sick with hope deferred.

Can it be that he has already heard the story she has to tell, and means by silence to show her his resolve? Will he put her away without any word of explanation or farewell?

White and silent she goes about the house, resuming her old place, performing her old duties with such firmness that Hetty for once is subdued, and even Ingram is quieter—more choice in words and ways.

It is a dreadfully wet and heavy day; the ground is sodden, the changing foliage of tree and shrub hangs limp upon the boughs, and the sky is one uniform drab hue.

"What a dreary outlook!" says Hetty, yawning extensively. "It is enough to drive one melancholy mad. I think I shall get my cloak and take a run through the grounds."

"It is raining fast!" Hero remarks, coldly. "It would be wiser to stay indoors," and she pretends to be engrossed with some work.

It is growing quite dusk, when Hetty, whose restlessness momentarily increases, rises and goes out. A little later Hero hears the hall-door open and shut, and, glancing up, sees the tall, dark figure of her late companion crossing the lawn.

She is not suspicious, but she cannot help thinking Hetty has some ulterior motive for her wet and dreary walk. She sits with idly-folded hands trying to guess what that motive may be, and the room grows darker still. Outside the night is fast closing in, the rain beats pitilessly upon the windows, falls with

steady drip, drip, upon the paths, and still Hetty does not return.

Suddenly a thought comes to Hero which drives the little remaining colour from lip and cheek; it seems that a voice whispers to her heart,—

"She has gone to meet your lover!"

Swift as lightning she rises, and hurrying into the hall, secures a mackintosh, in which she envelopes her whole figure, and then she, too, passes out, peering through the darkness and rain in search of Hetty and Herbert. Each moment the conviction that they are together becomes stronger and stronger; but they are not on the lawn; the arbours are deserted, the rosary silent and dismal.

She passes on to the shrubbery, and then she catches the glimmer of Hetty's grey cloak, hears the low murmur of her voice, through the gloom can just discern a man's figure, and her heart tells her who that man is. For a moment she stands like one stricken with death; her eyes are wide with anguish, her poor wan face ghastly and distorted, her limbs rigid.

But presently she stirs, and a little low moan, like the wail of a child in pain, breaks from her; then almost unconscious of what she does she goes forward, screening herself behind shrubs and trees, until she is quite close to them.

Herbert is looking moodily down; Hetty is talking eagerly, her handsome face very bright and earnest.

"Surely you do not hold yourself bound to Hero Vyvash or Wentworth" (I hardly know to which name she is entitled), "now that you have learned all? I have often heard you say you would not marry a woman of doubtful antecedents, and hers are more than doubtful."

Silence a time, save for the drip, drip, of the rain upon the trees and grass. Then the man speaks, and how eagerly the unhappy listener has waited his reply.

"I am more annoyed by this catastrophe than you can tell. My boat has always been that no Norman has ever allied himself to a woman whose relatives are unrepresentable. But, Hetty, I can hardly break my engagement on this pretext. The fault is not Hero's poor child, and she must not be made to suffer for it."

"Oh, he loves me still! he loves me still!" cries the "poor child" in her heart, then strives for calmness that she may hear Hetty's words. They are very distinct and very cruel.

"But you have sworn that you love me—that I am more to you than ever Hero Vyvash was."

"And so you are," passionately. "You should need no further assurance."

The listener flings her hands high above her head.

"Heaven save me from madness! Herbert! oh, Herbert! strike me dead here, and now. How can I live if you are false?"

No one hears the low wail; there is no one to heed her, or grieve with her. She sinks on her knees on the long wet grass, and hides her piteous white face in her cold trembling hands.

"Love, love!" and the voice is Herbert's, "I wish to Heaven we had never met, or that I had not madly dreamed my happiness was bound up in Hero. Ah! my darling, let us part now, whilst I have some remnant of honour. There is nothing else left us to do."

"I will not let you go," cries Hetty. "You shall not spoil our two lives. Can she love you as I do? Will she grieve if you break your promise? I tell you no."

"Oh, you lie, you lie!" breathes the kneeling girl; "he is all the world to me—my love, my life; but you have stolen him away. Oh! what shall I do! What shall I do?"

She lifts her weary head, and parting the thick growth of leaves looks out upon her lover—hers no more. He has drawn Hetty into his embrace, her arms are about his neck, her lips laid upon his.

"I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it," she says wildly, and covers down again.

"Take me back, Herbert. Hero will send some one in search of me soon. Kiss me again. Oh! How can you have the harsh strength necessary to send me away?"

"If you love me you will not tempt me, Hetty."

"It is because I love you that I tempt you to your happiness."

"Sweetheart, be brave, be true to yourself. Oh, love! love!"

"Those names were Hero's ones," murmurs the wretched girl, and she speaks of herself as of one who is dead; "you have forgotten her—oh! so long ago, so long ago, it seems."

Then she hears their steps drawing near, and shrinks further into the dense shadows of the wet foliage. If she stretches out her hand she can touch Hetty's cloak; if she speaks but in a whisper Herbert will hear. But she is silent, motionless, until they have passed her by, and Herbert's last words have reached her.

"If it is any consolation to you, Hetty, remember, if you are miserable, so am I. There is no more miserable man on earth."

Then she flings herself face downwards, writhing and moaning in her agony. How long she lies there she cannot tell; but at last she rises stiff and numb, and, in some way that she herself does not understand, reaches the house, and enters by one of the windows. Some instinct urges her to go to her room—it is the instinct of the wounded deer—and then she begins hurriedly to change her dress, to do away with all tears of the recent conflict. She must see Herbert to-night—at once. She will give him his freedom, and he shall not know what pain it costs her to be so generous. As she passes a mirror she catches the reflection of her face—it is drawn and ghastly.

"He must not see me thus," she thinks, with a throb of pride, and as she pauses on the threshold she remembers having seen some rouge on Hetty's toilet-table.

She enters the girl's room, and proceeds at once to impart some colour to her white and wasted cheeks; the application is not very skilful, but it will deceive Herbert, or she hopes it will.

Slowly and heavily she goes downstairs, and as she enters the drawing-room Herbert glances towards her with an expression of surprise. She looks almost pretty with the carmine tint upon her face, and her eyes are bright with anguish which he is too blind to see.

"Where have you been?" he questions. "I arrived nearly an hour ago."

She flushes through her rouge, but meets his eyes bravely.

"I did not hear you come," she says, and her low, sweet voice is very cold and proud. "I am sorry to have kept you waiting."

"How brilliant you are!" Hetty breaks in, maliciously. "A stranger would think you were painted—your colour is so deliciously delicate!"

Hero looks at her with calmest scorn, but makes no reply. She lays her hand lightly on Herbert's arm—such a little, cold hand it is,—

"I wish to see you alone for ten minutes. Will you come into the next room?"

"Oh, I will go!" cries Hetty, springing up. "I feel myself quite *de trop*."

"Thank you; I shall be glad if you will."

Then they are alone, face to face; but, alas! not heart to heart ever any more.

Hero shuts and locks the door; then she speaks,—

"I want to make all things plain to you. I want to act fairly and generously towards you. Assuming that you know nothing of the trouble that has come upon us I will tell you the whole story, but—won't you sit down?"

In silence he accepts the chair she pushes towards him; in silence he waits for her to speak again, wondering inwardly at the change in her.

She has always been half shy, half coquettish with him; now she is grave and calm,

with a look of pride on her pure, sweet face, and in her clear eyes.

Swiftly and quietly she tells the tale she knows he has learned from her rival's lips, and concludes thus,—

"Now tell me what an honourable man would do in such a case as yours?"

"He would fulfil his promise to the very letter."

"But what if the girl refused to allow such sacrifice?"

"What do you mean?" he asks, hoarsely; and at the expression of hope on his face Hero can scarcely refrain from crying out in agony and reproach. But she has chosen her way, and will not swerve from it.

"You are free," she says, in her cold, gentle tones. "Pray believe I will not link your life to mine—mine that is marred in its morning!"

"But," he says, seeking to secure her hands, "are you sure you mean this? Of course, I should have preferred your name to be untarnished; but you must not suffer for your father's crime."

She does not answer, but murmurs dreamily,—

"He was starving—his wife was dying—and it was such a little sum! His friend would never have suffered from loss of it; and then her calmness is broken through a moment."

Flinging her hands together passionately, she moans,—

"Oh, father! father! the punishment is too great for the offence!"

"You have not given me my answer," the young man says, gently. "Hero, will you not believe that, knowing what I know, I shall not esteem you less—that I will do my best to make you happy as my wife?"

"I believe all this," she answers, having regained her composure; "but this trial has taught me to read myself aright, and has opened my eyes to the fact that you do not love me. Hush! it is Hetty who fills your thoughts. Hetty who has your heart; and I am glad we have found out our mistake before it is too late."

"Do you mean to say you do not love me?" he questions, amazedly.

And for the sake of his peace she lies to him.

"Thank you for making matters so easy," he says, coolly accepting the situation, and refusing to see the anguish in her eyes. "I should have kept silence to the end."

"Acknowledge that my way is best," she says, with a smile.

"Infinitely best; although, Hero, I find it difficult to realise that you have changed. We always called you a model of constancy. (Oh, fool and blind, so to torture her loving heart! so to add to her already unendurable woe!) 'I am half inclined,' he says, with a gleeful laugh, 'to feel disappointed in you, to wish you had not given me my freedom unasked.'"

"Don't; you make me feel so small in my own esteem. Aren't you anxious to see Hetty? You will find her in the next room, I believe; and all the while her heart is crying, 'Leave me, leave me; let me have one hour alone with my grief.'"

"Tell me," he says, "when you first began to think less of me?"

"How can I tell? Such things grow by degrees. Perhaps I set you too high for love; perhaps I thought you a god in perfection and truth; and now—well, now I have discovered that my idol has feet of clay, that I am not so faithful as I fancied myself to be. However that may be you are free, and we part friends."

"Yes," he says, eagerly, "friends, of course. I may kiss you, Hero?"

"Why not?" with hard flippancy, and lifts her face to his level.

Then she is alone; she hears him go from the room, carefully closing the door, and, with a low wail, she falls on her knees beside a couch, sobbing, "He is mine by right of his promise! I only love him! She will break his heart! Oh, dear Heaven! what shall I do now? What shall I do?"

Later on she goes to her father. Hiding her face on his shoulder, she says, in a voice which she vainly strives to make calm,—

"Dear, it is all over between Herbert and I, and it is better so. He will marry Hetty, and I shall spend all my life with you. We will be very happy together."

Mr. Vyvash holds her closer.

"My poor child, my poor child!" he murmurs; "your lot is harder than mine, for you have lost all."

"Don't," she says, hurriedly; "I can bear anything but pity," and so, in silence, they sit together until midnight.

Then Hero rises, and, wishing her father good-night, goes upstairs. Hetty opens her door as she passes.

"Stay a moment, Hero; I want your congratulations."

Her eyes are bright with malicious triumph, her handsome face flushed. Hero looks steadily at her a moment; then says, quietly,—

"You have built your happiness upon the ruin of mine. May you be proportionately happy," and so passes into her room to spend long hours in agonised prayers and unavailing entreaties.

In the morning Madam Norman comes.

"What is this I hear?" she asks, abruptly, and scans the white, small face with keen, but kindly eyes. "Herbert has told me a strange story!"

"It is all true, dear Mrs. Norman. We have discovered our engagement was a mistake, and so have wisely ended it."

The sweet lips quiver, and the true eyes fill with tears. The old lady draws the girl to her.

"You have not changed," she says, huskily. "The fault has been all my boy's. Oh, you poor little Hero! What are you going to do with your life?"

"How can I tell?" in a sudden access of passion and despair. "I loved him, and I have lost him; but I am not the only sorrowful one in the house! Oh! if you could see my father, my poor miserable, remorseful father, even you would pity him!"

"Heaven forbid that I should do otherwise! I consider his punishment infinitely greater than his sin. The man who was so mercileless to him ought to have a heavy heart. But, child, surely you will not allow Herbert his freedom merely to lose it again to Miss Collison?"

"What else can I do? Can I win back his love? No, no; dead love does not revive again! Can I bear to see him wretched? Oh, no! Rather let me suffer all my life than any years of his should be made bitter!"

"You are an angel, Hero! I hoped one day to call you daughter. I should have gladly resigned my position in the Hall to you; but I will never countenance Hetty Collison's presence, and so I told Herbert."

As she speaks Hetty enters the room, and seeing who the visitor is, assumes a deprecatory, shy air, which, however, fails to impose on the astute, warm-hearted old lady.

"So you are the girl my son has chosen in Miss Vyvash's place?"

"He has done me the honour to offer me his name, madam," softly, "but he had first obtained his release from Hero."

"Humph! Come here, and let me look at you," and as Hetty obeys, she peers up into the bold, handsome face with anything but favour.

"Your beauty has bewitched him," she says at last. "Men are proverbially fools where a lovely woman is concerned. But you will soon disillusionise him; you will make his life a burden and a misery to him. You are false and cruel, bold and unprincipled, and when you come to the Hall I shall leave it."

"I am very glad you have arrived at such a sensible decision," Hetty retorts, insolently, "as I shall not be under the painful necessity of requesting you to leave," and with a short laugh she turns away. But at the window she pauses.

"Knowing your pride, madam, I believed

you would prefer Herbert's wife to have no stain upon her name. Few people care to consort with convicts or their daughters," and with a contemptuous glance at the two women she steps out upon the lawn, and goes to meet her lover.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Charles Ingram hears of Hetty's engagement, he threatens vengeance, terrible and speedy, upon Herbert Norman; but as Hetty only laughs at him, and Hero is openly contemptuous, he contents himself with making violent plunges at the walls and doors with a carving knife, by way of illustrating how he will serve his rival.

It is, however, a curious and noteworthy fact that when Herbert enters the house Ingram leaves it with more speed than is consistent with dignity.

The slow and dreadful days dragon, and life is intolerable alike to Vyvash and his daughter.

"Hero," he says one morning, "this state of things is killing me. Child! child! can you suggest no way of escape? I shall go mad with the shame and misery of it all."

She leans her head upon her hands, and appears lost in thought; but suddenly her face flushes with new hope. She lifts herself erect, and whispers hurriedly,—

"Yes, dear, I have found a way. We will run away from our own home. We will find some new place in which to hide, and we will be happy—oh, so happy together!"

He does not share her hopefulness. "We shall find escape impossible; Ingram is so watchful."

"Give me time to mature my plans," she answers, cheerfully, "and don't include such a word as impossible in your vocabulary."

Two or three days pass by, and the fancies Hero has forgotten her project, when she calls him into her room.

"Dear," she says, "get together a few necessary things. We shall leave here to-night. Hush! don't exclaim, but lock the door, and see my disguise."

She rapidly dresses herself in a full plain skirt, fashioned after the style of an elderly farm wife's, a bright-hued Paisley shawl, a great bonnet and heavy veil. Her beautiful hair is brushed back from her brow, and hidden in a coil under the unbecoming bonnet.

"Shall I do?" she questions, with a faint smile. "If you met me in the street, would you know me, dear? Ah! your eyes say no. Well, now, listen. To-night, when Ingram is safe in his room, you must shave off all this venerable beard, and alter your appearance to the best of your ability. Then I will steal down to you. Leave the study window open, because through that we must effect our escape. We shall walk to the station. I will take third-class tickets for London. Once there we shall be safe; and Mrs. Norman, who is in the plot, will write us from time to time, so that we shall not be ignorant of the enemy's movements. Leave a note for Ingram to the effect that he shall be paid a certain sum quarterly on application to your solicitor, as long as he keeps silence."

She gives him all the details of her plan clearly and concisely; takes upon herself the leadership in all things; is so quiet, so brave, so intelligent, that Mr. Vyvash regards her with unmitigated wonder.

When dinner is announced she takes her place quietly, and with a smile upon her lips. Voluntarily she addresses Ingram, and plies him with wine, although it must be confessed he does not need any persuasion to fill his glass again and again.

In wonder at the change in her, he says, coarsely,—

"I say, what's up? You're deuced amiable all at once!"

And she answers, with no change of expression,—

"Matters have been so uncomfortable of late that I have made up my mind to make the best of a bad bargain. If we are to re-

main in the same house it will be pleasanter to exercise some civility to each other."

"Ah! you find I'm a man of my word, and it's the best policy to be friendly with me. Why, bless you, I could floor you as easily as I can break this!" and he dashes his glass to the ground.

She will not show her disgust.

"Doubtless; I should not like to make trial of your strength," and she smiles brightly up at him.

He has now drunk sufficient wine to render him noisy; a little more, and he grows amorous, and presently he will be quarrelsome. In her heart Hero is wofully afraid, and she has such need of courage to night. Presently she rises.

"You will join us soon in the drawing-room?" she says. "Hetty will have pleasure in singing to you."

"Oh, I say; don't go yet!" he cries, trying to catch her skirts; but she eludes him cleverly.

"Remember, we shall wait for you," she says, and so slips from the room.

Three hours later a little dark figure steals along the corridors, pauses a moment at Hetty's room, from whence comes the sound of regular breathing; then, swiftly and noiselessly, goes downstairs. The dining-room door is thrown open, and on a couch lies Charles Ingram, deep in drunken slumber.

With a sign of thankfulness, Hero proceeds to the study. Her father is asleep in his chair, but dressed for the journey.

"Father!" she whispers, "wake! There is no time to lose! Hush! no noise, dear, or he will be roused. Are you quite ready?"

Together they step through the open window, and turn to take a long, farewell glance at the dear familiar home which has sheltered them for so many years; then they bend their steps resolutely towards the station.

Hero takes their tickets, and hurries Mr. Vyvash (well disguised by his muffler) into an empty compartment. Then the signal is given for starting, the train moves out of the station, and, with a thankful sigh, Hero sinks back.

"Free!" she says; "free at last, my dear!"

"But not safe," Mr. Vyvash answers drearly. "I seem to have lost all capacity for hope," and he grasps her gentle hand as if to gain courage from mere contact with her.

She smiles bravely up at him, although her heart is aching, and she is so wearied that she longs intensely for rest. But her father does not guess this; he even finds himself feeling reproachfully towards her because she is so cheerful, and seems so easily to have forgotten Herbert.

It is a foggy morning in December, and Mr. Vyvash is sitting with his daughter at breakfast in the first-floor parlour of a Lambeth lodging-house. Hero had decided that in a populous, and not too aristocratic locality, they would be safer than at Kensington; and although he grumbled a little, Mr. Vyvash offered no opposition to her will.

In answer to a knock at the door, Hero says, "Come in," and a neat, rather pretty girl enters.

"A letter for you, Miss Vyvash!" she says, in a tone of curiosity; for the first-floor lodgers rarely receive so much as a post-card.

Hero flushes slightly as she glances at the handwriting; and, being alone with her father, again says,—

"It is from Mrs. Norman. Shall I read it to you now, dear?"

"Yes; I find no news in the paper this morning," and his voice is querulous. "Our present mode of life is most melancholy."

"It will be better when spring comes, dear," she answers gently, and, opening her letter, begins to read:—

"MY DEAR HERO,—I have great news for you, but I shall save the best until last. First (and oh! my child, how can I bear to hurt you, as I know I shall!) that poor silly boy of mine has crowned his folly by marrying Hetty Collison. The ceremony took place yesterday, and was by special license—no bridesmaids, no pretty frippery, although Miss Collison

begged hard for some display. They left for Nice at once, and intend to be absent a month. When they return I shall be gone, as the same house cannot shelter that woman and myself. I don't know where I shall pitch my tent, but, if you will have me, I shall be glad to spend a few weeks with you whilst my plans are maturing.

"Now for the news I called good; it is, perhaps, wicked to rejoice even in the death of one's enemies, and yet I do rejoice, for your sake, that Charles Ingram is dead."

The letter drops from Hero's hand, and with a sudden, passionate gesture she flings her arms about her father, sobbing out,—

"Oh, my darling! my darling! You are safe. Kiss me. Let me be the first to congratulate you. Father! father! how happy we will be!"

At first he does not seem to understand; sorrow and fear have so benumbed his faculties; but at last the truth is borne fully in upon him, and bowing his face on the pretty brown head, he sobs like a little child.

When they have grown calmer, Hero takes up the letter once again, and resumes the thread of Mrs. Norman's story:—

"I will tell you all about it. Of course, after your flight Ingram was like one gone mad, and frightened the servants out of their senses; but when he had grown quieter and had had time for thought, he gave out that Mr. and Miss Vyvash had been called away suddenly, leaving everything in his care, as a proof of their trust in and affection for him. Then he gave himself up wholly to drinking; he was never sober, and it was useless for Linsell to lock up the cellar, for then he procured wines from the 'Green Man.'"

"Well, on Thursday, he invited some men from the village to dine with him, and I suppose the orgies were fearful. When they were all gone he lay down upon a couch and went to sleep. No one disturbed him, and when Linsell went down in the morning he found him still in the same position, and the room unnaturally still. He called to him and tried by every conceivable means to rouse him, but failed; and getting frightened he started one of the maids for the doctor.

"Well, to make a disagreeable story short, the inquest was held this morning, and the verdict was, 'Death through excessive drinking.' So now, my dear child, you can return to us once more; that is, if the place is not hateful to you. Believe me, you are sorely missed, and none will be so glad to welcome you back as the woman who once hoped to call you 'daughter.'"

"If you determine to remain where you are write me at once."

Little remains for me to say. Hero and her father returned home three days after the receipt of Mrs. Norman's letter, and the old lady met them on the threshold with words of loving welcome.

In a short time they were settled quietly in the familiar house. Then Hero's life of self-abnegation begins. It is soon patent to her that her father's mental faculties are becoming obscured; he grows daily more helpless, more childish, cannot bear to lose her from his side if but for an hour. And so in love and patience she watches over him for three long years; then she is alone once more, for Edwin Vyvash is gathered to his rest.

Hetty queens it at the Hall, but Mrs. Norman lives with Hero at the white house with the verandah. And Herbert! Well, he has lived to regret his folly; to turn with loathing from the violent, unprincipled, heartless woman it is his misery to call wife.

Alas! for Hero. No second love can visit her heart, or make her life beautiful; but steadily she turns from thoughts of the past, for all old associations are cruel, all old memories instinct with agony, and

"Bitter to the heart
The very ways where now they walk apart."

[THE END.]

FACETIÆ.

ALWAYS IN TIME—"T."

Why are bankers' clerks like the men at the doors of a theatre? Because they are check-takers.

"Is your friend the doctor a Swedeborgian, Mrs. Fiskwacker?" asked one lady of another. "Oh, no; he's a Norwegian," was the reply.

A curious definition of a dentist—"A dentist, love, makes teeth of bone For those whom fate has left without, And finds provision for his own By pulling other people's out."

"Ma, can I go over to Sallie's house and play a little while?" asked four-year-old Mamie. "Yes, dear; I don't care if you do." "Thank you, ma," was the demure reply; "I've been."

"Why are you so precise in your statement? Are you afraid of telling an untruth?" asked a lawyer of a witness in a police court. "No, sir!" was the prompt reply, "I wouldn't be afraid to tell a dozen of 'em."

"Yes," said a fashionable lady, "I think Mary has made such a very good match. I hear that her husband is one of the shrewdest and most unprincipled lawyers in the profession, and, of course, he can afford to gratify her every wish."

"Poor John—he was a kind and forbearing husband!" sobbed John's widow, on her return from the funeral. "Yes," said a sympathising neighbour; "but it is all for the best. You must try to comfort yourself, my dear, with the thought that your husband is at peace at last."

JONES, who is in bad health, but improving, returns home, whereupon the wife of his bosom says: "Well, and how are you now?" Jones—"Better. In fact, I feel quite another man." Wife—"I'm glad to hear it. I was getting tired of the old one." Jones continues to improve.

QUITE HIMSELF.—Fitzbooke, fresh from the Continent, met Brown the other day, and told him of the many illustrious persons he had fallen in with there. Among others, he mentioned Freckles, the art critic. "And was he quite himself?" quoth Brown. "Quite," was the reply; "he borrowed ten pounds."

"How jaded your horse looks, cabman!" remarked an old lady as she dismounted from the cab. "Is not the bit uncomfortably large for his mouth?" "It ain't the big bit in his mouth, mum; it's the small bit in his stomach; and," looking at the shilling she tendered for her fare, "it doesn't seem as if it'll get much larger."

VERY LIKELY.—A mate, on board a ship manned with a crew who had had no nautical experience, took packs of cards, and nailed one card close to where each rope was made fast, and named the rope after the card. The result was such orders as, "Let go the ace of spades!" "Man the nine of hearts and nine of diamonds!" "Haul tight the queen of clubs!"

AMAZING INDEED!—A French count won a great reputation for courage in 1870, during the siege of Paris, when he patriotically mounted guard upon the ramparts. He never ducked his head or threw himself prostrate when shot or shell whistled by or exploded near. "Amazing!" his comrades used to say. "How wonderfully cool!" The fact was, the count was stone deaf!

A CLERGYMAN relates that as he was wending his way to church, on the sabbath, he saw a boy with a fishing-rod over his shoulder going in the opposite direction, when the following dialogue ensued, the clergyman taking the initiative: "Don't you know you are a bad boy?" "Yes, sir." "Doesn't your father ever punish you?" "Yes, sir; last summer he made me go to Sunday-school twice."

A RECIPÉ for a lemon-pudding adds, "Then sit on a hot stove and stir constantly."

A FEW men can "read between the lines," but nearly all men go out between the acts of a play.

THINGS one would rather have left unsaid. "You remember that party at Madame Gelasma's, to hear Joachim, Rubinstein, and the Bonachels and De Soria—quite a small party?" "No; I wasn't there!" "No? Ah—well—it was very select!"

SICK HUSBAND—"Did the doctor say that I was to take all that medicine?" Wife—"Yes, dear." Sick husband—"Why, there is enough in that bottle to kill a mule." Wife (anxiously)—"Then you had better be very careful, John."

"This isn't a menagerie," sharply observed an irascible woman to a man who was trying to force his way through the crowd at the door of a concert-room. "No, I suppose not," returned the man, "or they wouldn't leave any of the animals to block up the entrance."

A MAN at the telephone shouted, "Hello, there; why on earth don't you speak louder?" An angelic voice replied, "What did you say?" "Oh," exclaimed he, recognising the voice of the daisy at the central office; "excuse me; I thought I was talking with my wife."

MINISTER'S wife, rather trying at times:—"How much did you get for performing that marriage ceremony this morning?" Minister—"Ten shillings." Wife—"Only ten shillings?" Minister—"Yes; the poor fellow said he had been married before, and I hadn't the heart to charge him more than that."

The latest anecdote about the old lady who thinks she knows "everything" is about how she went to a church social, and as she entered the church the young ladies said:—"Good evening, auntie, we are glad you came; we are going to have a tableaux this evening." "Yes, I know, I know," was the reply. "I smelt 'em when I first came in."

HIS WASN'T A LIAR.—Magistrate (to new policeman): "Did you notice no suspicious characters about the neighbourhood?" New Policeman: "Shure, yer honour, I saw but one mon, an' I asked him wot he was doin' there at that time o' night. Sez he, 'I have no business here jest now, but I expects to open a jewellery shop in this vicinity later on.' At that I sez, 'I wish ye success, sorr.' " Magistrate (disgusted): "Yes, and he did open a jewellery shop in that vicinity, and stole seventeen watches." New Policeman (after a pause): "Begorra, yer honour, the mon may have been a thafe, but he was no liar."

HE WANTED TACKS.—A wag, sauntering along Oxford-street the other day, was accosted by a man who stammered:—"Can you t-t-tell me where I may g-g-get some g-g-g-good t-t-tin t-t-tacks?" "Certainly," replied the wag. "You turn down this street on your left, then turn again first on your left, and again first to your left, and that will bring you to the best ironmonger's shop in this neighbourhood, where you'll be sure to find them." The stammerer continued his way. The wag, walking down the street quickly, entered the aforesaid shop, and proceeded as follows: "Have you any g-g-g-good t-t-tin t-t-tacks?" "Yes, sir," said the obliging shopman, producing his best, after some rummaging. "Are you sure th-these are g-g-good ones?" "Yes, sir, the best that are made." "Are th-th-the heads g-g-good and strong?" "Yes, sir." "Have they g-g-got s-s-s-sharp p-p-p-points?" "Yes, sir." "Well, you p-p-p-please sit on them till I come back, will you?" Exit rapidly. Presently the unlucky stammerer, having described three sides of a square, arrived at the shop, and entering, asked innocently: "Have you any g-g-g-good t-t-tin t-t-tacks?" When he recovered, he asked whether the house fell on him, or if it was simply an explosion.

"You've eaten next to nothing," lisped Smithers, who was dining with his girl. "Oh, I always do that when I sit by you," responded the young lady, pleasantly.

"Doctor, I'm worried about my husband. Do you think him seriously ill?" "To the best of my judgment, madam, he is suffering from gastritis." "There! I knew it! I told him his trouble was from fooling with that gas-meter yesterday!"

A FOND father presented his four-year-old boy with a trumpet, with which he was greatly infatuated. All day the boy tooted away delightfully, and at bed-time, when his grandmother told him to put the trumpet down and say his prayers, the little fellow said: "Oh, no! I'll tell you what let's do, grandma; you pray, and I'll keep on blowing."

NOT A STEAK FOR JOAN.—Cross Husband (sitting down to a late breakfast): "Wife, have you ever heard of Joan of Arc?" Wife: "Yes, indeed!" Husband: "She was burned at the stake, wasn't she?" Wife: "That is what history says." Husband: "Well, this steak wouldn't scorch her any. It's as cold as a wedge."

FIRST BOOTBLACK: "Billy, would you like to go into partnership with me?" Second ditto: "Yes, sir. 'We'll begin now.'" "Very well: run over to the corner and get two boxes of blacking." "Where's the money?" "Money! Why, I could get it myself with money. Here, I'll dissolve this partnership. You are no help to me."

INNOCENT DEAR.—A gentleman was considering what kind of a present to give a young lady friend, and at last deciding that it should be a ring, said to her: "Now, my dear friend, what kind of a ring would you like? It is so very puzzling; there are so many sorts." "Well, Mr. Smith, one, you know, don't like to make a choice in these matters—little delicate—you understand; but, really, if you insist upon it—why, I should like an engagement ring!" was the innocent reply.

CHIPS.

NEVER run into det, not if yu can find enny-thing else to run into.

Go to bed arly, and git up arly, and be karefull what yu dream about.

Be honest if yu kan, if yu kant be honest, pray for help.

Eat fish twice a week, if yu can't git fish, git herring.

Allwuss be polite, it costs nothing, and will convince more people than logic will.

Allwuss drink water if yu can git it; if yu kan't git it, drink milk and water.

Marry yung, and if yu make a hit, keep cool, and don't brag about it.

Be kind to yure mother-in-law, and if necessary, pay for her board at sam good hotel.

Bathe thoroly once a week in softe water and kasteel soap, and avoid tie boots.

Laff every time yu feel tickled, and laff once in a while enny how.

Hold the baby half the time, and allwuss start the fire in the morning, and put on the tea kettle.

Don't jaw back—it only proves that yu are az big a phool az the other phello.

Try everything fust, but if yu have got a boy who iz bound to go to ruin, let him went.

Liv within yure inkum, but allwuss spend all that yu can afford to.

Listen with both eyes and ears, and talk more to pleaze others than to pleaze yourself.

Be charitable, but don't let yur sympathy make a phool ov yure sense.

Sleep on a hard bed, and don't eat a second time what yu kno has hurt yu once.

Smoke only three cigars a day, and smoke good ones or smoke none at all.

Allwuss inquire the price ov a thing before yu buy it, and never buy enny thing just be-kanze yu think it iz cheap.

Never borrow what yu are able to buy, and allwuss hav sam things that yu won't lend.

JOSE BILLINGS.

SOCIETY.

HER MAJESTY, it is stated, is about to be invited to open the new Cathedral at Truro next summer. To give weight to the invitation, it is to be pointed out to Her Majesty that the sacred edifice, now far advanced towards completion, is the only new cathedral built since the Reformation. If the Queen accepts, her presence in Truro will constitute her first public appearance in Cornwall.

THE QUEEN'S return to Windsor gives lively satisfaction to the Royal borough, as business briskens up when the Court is there, and the town is enlivened by a daily performance of Dan Godfrey's unrivalled band on the Castle Hill.

APPROPOS of the Princess of Wales's appetite, says *Modern Society*, few persons have any idea how poor an eater Her Royal Highness is. Only the most delicate dishes tickle her palate, and even of these she takes scarcely enough to feed a canary. Sanguinary meat is her special abhorrence. She is also very particular what she drinks, a very small quantity satisfying her. It may interest ladies to know that Her Royal Highness is a devout lover of a cup of tea; but it must be carefully made, "drawn" to a second, creamed to a nicety, and sweetened with one moderate-sized lump of sparkling white sugar. If it isn't all this, the Princess won't drink it.

Few people, after meeting the Queen of Italy two or three times, fail to notice that she invariably wears a coral necklace morning, noon, and night, and even on State occasions, when it is accompanied by a rivière of diamonds. The fact is the necklace is never removed except when Her Majesty retires to rest, and during her ablutions.

The story of the ornament, and the Queen's attachment to it, is a pretty one. Some years back her son, the Prince of Naples, was walking out with his tutor when he saw it in the window of a jeweller's shop. He wished to buy it for his mother, but the price was too high for his youthful purse, and he bargained with the tradesman to purchase it bead by bead, by degrees, as he could save the money. He commenced by leaving the money for five corals, and he was only able to complete the purchase in two years. When the Queen learnt of this trait of affection she vowed that she would never part from the necklace.

LADY DUFFERIN gave a children's fancy-dress dance at the Viceroyal Lodge, Simla, lately, which was well attended. The dresses worn consisted of a Gipsy, White Cat (two), Duchesse of Devonshire, Bo-peep (two), Fairy, Page, Colleen Dhu, Watteau Shepherdess, Queen of the Sea, Butterfly, Portia, Neapolitan Peasant, a Fairy Queen (two), Queen of Diamonds, and Coming through the Rye. The boys' costumes were: Court Dress George III., Neapolitan Fisherman, Jovial Huntsman (three), Court Dress, King of Hearts, Fisherman, Russian Peasant, Poudré, Page, Edward VI., Matador, Jockey, Masher, Clown, Page, Henry VIII. Some of the above also figured in the Singing Lancers, but others were: An Old Maid of Ten (three), Madame Favart, Watteau Flower Girl, Queen, White Daisy. Among the boys were: A Gentleman Eighteenth Century, Lord Nelson, XII. B.C. Costume, and a Government House A.D.C.

ON the 16th October the marriage of Mr. W. A. Winwood Smith, youngest son of Sir William Smith, Bart., with Harriet E., third daughter of the late Mr. John Lethbridge Cowland, of Madford, Lanescon, was solemnised in St. Mary Magdalene's Church, Lanescon.

The bride was attired in rich ivory satin, with long Court train; a tulle veil, with wreath of orange blossom, the veil being fastened on the shoulder with a spray of orange blossom and a diamond brooch of three swallows, the gift of the Lord Chancellor, and Lady Halsbury.

STATISTICS.

THE WORLD'S CONSUMPTION OF MEAT.—An economist of repute, Pedro S. Lamas, has summed up the total quantity of meat consumed in the world. There are, he finds, on the surface of the globe 47,500,000 head of cattle, and 105,000,000 of sheep. Europe and Algeria provide 25,000,000 of cattle and 50,000,000 of sheep; Australia, New Zealand and the Cape, 2,500,000 of cattle and 20,000,000 of sheep; the United States and Canada, 9,375,000 cattle and 9,750,000 sheep; the Argentine Republic and Uruguay, 6,000,000 cattle and 24,000,000 sheep; and Central America, 4,250,000 cattle and 1,250,000 sheep. Having allowed a percentage for the reproduction of species, M. Lamas fixes the yearly consumption of beef at 7,930,000,000 kilograms (each kilogram being about 2 1/5 pounds), and of mutton at 10,550,000,000 kilograms. Comparing these figures with the populations, in the five great groups into which he has divided the cattle and sheep world, he finds that every inhabitant of La Plata has 160 kilos of beef, and 56 kilos of mutton at his disposal each year; in the United States and Canada it is 23 kilos of beef and 2 of mutton; in Europe it is 15 of beef and 2 of mutton; and in Central America it is 14 of beef and a quarter of a kilo of mutton. In the Argentine Republic they eat 60 kilos a head and export 156; in Australia a similar quantity is consumed and 56 kilos exported; while every citizen of the United States wants 7 kilos of foreign meat to augment the annual consumption of 25 kilos. The average consumption in Europe is 18 kilos per head, and 1 kilo imported. She gets 180,000,000 kilos from Australia, 260,000,000 from the United States and Canada, and 14,000,000 from the Argentine Republic. North America, it seems, oversells itself.

GEMS.

SOME books are edifices to stand as they are built; some are hewn stones ready to form a part of future edifices; some are quarries from which stones are to be split for shaping and after use.

CHARITY itself commands us, where we know no ill, to think well of all; but friendship, which always goes a pitch higher, gives a man a peculiar right and claim to the good opinion of his friend.

The mind should be accustomed to make wise reflections, and draw curious conclusions, as it goes along; the habit of which makes Pliny the younger affirm that he never read a book but he drew some profit from it.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CHICKEN PATTIES.—Mince cold chicken, and stir it into a white sauce, made of milk thickened with cornflour, and flavoured with pepper, salt, and butter. Line small pattypans with puff-paste, bake first; then fill with the mixture, and set in a hot oven for a few minutes to brown.

VICTORIA PUDDING.—Boil two ounces of sago with six ounces of sugar in half a pint of water for three-quarters of an hour, add six ounces of fresh fruit, again boil for an hour, and then put into a mould; let it stand until cold, then turn it out and pour a little syrup round the base. Milk may be eaten with it.

BREAD SAUCE FOR POULTRY.—Boil some peppercorns with one onion in half a pint of water for about ten minutes. Then strain off the water, and put some grated bread in it, with about two ounces of butter. Boil all together for a little while, and add a spoonful of milk, which will give it a good colour. It must not be too thick. Add salt, to the taste.

MISCELLANEOUS.

MADE OF PAPER.—Additional uses for paper now include belt pulleys. One of these is composite, formed of a cast-iron hub, a web or body made of paper pasted and pressed into a solid block, of the thickness to give it the required strength, and this web, surrounded by a wrought or cast rim, secured to the web by means of knees or fingers riveted through the rim and the paper. It is claimed for this invention, as the result of various tests, that the rim, having a uniform bearing upon the paper body, is more steady, even and perfect than any other description of pulley heretofore made.

CORDUROY FOR ROYALTY.—Very fashionable people abroad are wearing velvet corduroy. It is to be had in all colours and in light and heavy weight, the former used for dresses and the latter for jackets. It combines effectively with cloth, plush, velveteen and cashmere, or is used alone, simply trimmed with rows of stitching. A dress recently made for one of the members of our Royal Family was of deep fawn-coloured corduroy, with several rows of stitching around the underskirt. The overdress was a short folded scarf in front, the back drapery being full. The round bodice had the vest, standing collar, and cuffs of brown leather. A mouse-coloured corduroy had the trimming of mole-skin. This fur has already appeared as trimming for bonnets and toques. It is very effective, as it is so soft and silvery.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF GERMAN GIRLS.—As a matter of course, they take their share in household work; this does not prevent their being frequently very accomplished, often excellent musicians; but it does prevent a great deal of restlessness and vague discontent. A young man who marries in that class knows that he may reasonably expect his bride to be a good housewife. If he is in the upper middle class, for instance, a shopkeeper, his wife often keeps the accounts of the shop. I have wondered at the close attention to business details shown by women who might have expected to be spared such exertions; but I was assured they preferred to be thus occupied, partly in order to save for their children. It seemed to me that the master and mistress in most shops were on friendly terms with their assistants, who were permitted to rest at intervals during the day in a room behind the shop.

HOW THE RUSSIANS KEEP WARM.—The Russians have a great knack of making their winters pleasant. You feel nothing of the cold in those tightly built houses, where all doors and windows are double, and where the rooms are kept warm by big stoves hidden in the walls. There is no damp in a Russian house, and the inmates may dress indoors in the lightest garb, which contrasts oddly with the mass of furs and wraps which they don when going out. A Russian can afford to run no risk of exposure when he leaves the house for a walk or a drive. He covers his head and ears with a fur bonnet, his feet and legs with felt boots lined with wool or fur, which are drawn over the ordinary boots and trousers, and reach up to the knees; he next cloaks himself in a top coat with a fur collar, lining, and cuffs; he buries his hands in fingerless gloves of bear or seal skin. Thus equipped, the Russian exposes his nose only to the cold air, and he takes care to frequently rub that organ to keep the circulation going. A stranger would often get his nose frozen if it was not for the courtesy of the Russians, who will always warn him if they see his nose "whitening," and will, unbidden, help him to chafe it vigorously with snow. In Russian cities, walking is just possible for men during winter, but hardly so for ladies. The women of the lower order wear knee boots; those of the shop-keeping class seldom venture out at all; those of the aristocracy go out in sleighs.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

L. R. S.—Consult a physician. It is hazardous to tamper with such eruptions of the skin.

D. W.—Worms, a city in Germany, was called "Land of Joy" from its excellent wine.

R. S.—Kismet means that which is fated. The word is Arabic.

H. T. J.—The poem can only, we believe, now be got at the British Museum.

Brown Lucy.—Let it alone, or use the tweezers. All depilatories are dangerous, and not to be recommended.

R. C. H.—Write to the bandmaster of the regiment in question, enclosing stamped addressed envelopes for reply.

S. M. A.—1. Not too tall, but quite tall enough. A well-proportioned young lady of that height would be unanimously pronounced a fine girl.

C. H. H.—The handwriting is fair, but not suitable for copying purposes. It should be much larger, and free from flourishes. Daily practice will improve it.

ADA.—1. No knowledge of the word as spelled. 2. No recipe for the purpose, save clipping the hairs short off from time to time.

E. V. M.—Caledonia is the ancient Latin name of Scotland; Albion that of Britain, said to have been given to it on account of the lofty white cliffs on the southern coast.

MARY D.—1. The former phrase is preferable. 2. Wear woollen gloves, and take plenty of exercise. 3. The best way is to answer suitable advertisements, or advertise yourself. 4. Quite sufficient.

ROLLING STONE.—Several capital books of recitations are published, but we do not know if any of them contain the special recitation mentioned. Any bookseller could get you a good book very cheap.

S. W. W.—The passage referred to occurs in *Isaiah*, chapter xxiv., verse 30. We quote the whole verse, as follows: "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again."

A. A. C.—1. She might sue in *forma pauperis*. 2. He can be prevented by making an application on affidavit for the proper writ. Apply to a respectable solicitor. 3. There are plenty of books of quotations published at about half-a-crown. Any good bookseller could get you one. 4. Not at all advisable. You can both afford to wait at least three years. 5. Your character, like your writing, we should judge to be unformed; both require considerable improvement. 6. Not many for either. 7. The third finger of the right hand. Please in future reduce the number of your questions.

L. A. N.—The house crickets of Europe have straight wings, which, when not in use, are folded lengthwise along the back, the upper wings having a narrow border which is folded down so as to cover also the sides of the body. The male cricket makes a loud noise or chirp by rubbing the hard internal border of one wing-cover against a horny ridge on the under surface of the other. Its note is so pleasant to some persons that it is kept in a cage by the fireside. In America there are several species, but no house crickets. We are not aware that any of them have ever proved attractive enough to be made pets of.

DORA.—A fine wash for sweetening the breath is made as follows: Take a quarter of an ounce each of dried mint and thyme; half an ounce of cloves, crushed; half a nutmeg, grated; pour on to these ingredients half a pint of any spirits, and let the mixture stand together for two or three days; then strain off the tincture formed, and add ten drops of oil of peppermint; it is then ready for use. It may be used by pouring a few drops on the tooth-brush, and cleaning the teeth with it in the ordinary way; but it answers equally well if mixed with an equal quantity of water, and applied as a gargle to rinse the mouth.

C. H. W.—To make Smyrna pudding, take the inside of a small loaf of baker's bread, and put it into a deep pan, with two ounces of butter. Pour over it one pint of boiling milk; and after remaining a sufficient length of time to become completely saturated; with a spoon mash it until it is very smooth and fine. Whisk six eggs until thick and light, and stir in gradually. Then add one quart of milk, mix all well together, and sweeten to taste. Pour the mixture into a pudding dish, sift a little cinnamon over the top, and bake in a quick oven. When done and cold, have ready some fine ripe peaches, which pare, slice, and sugar. Just before sending the pudding to table, place as many on the top as the dish will conveniently hold, and sift over them white sugar.

Q. T. T.—Michael is an archangel, mentioned in the Bible as having special charge of the Israelites as a nation, as disputing with Satan about the body of Moses, and as carrying on a war, with the assistance of his angels, against Satan and his forces. We quote, in regard to the conflict, from *Revelations*, chapter xii., verses 7, 8, 9: "And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." Michael figures largely in Milton's "Paradise Lost."

AMY.—Beef marrow is employed to promote the growth of the hair.

D. R.—October 7, 1882, came on Tuesday; October 9, 1871, on Monday.

G. V. S.—Glycerine diluted with borax water will remove sunburn, and sometimes freckles.

LULY.—Zuleika is the name of the heroine of Byron's poem "The Bride of Abydos."

GRACE.—It is a weakness that time only can enable you to overcome.

G. H.—To make liquid gold, take gold leaf and grind it with gum water, and bottle for use.

S. T. W.—A weak solution of borax and water will remove dandruff for the time. Use it only when necessary.

MARY.—To remove white spots from furniture, rub the spots with pulverized pumice-stone wet with water, and then with buckskin moistened with sweet oil; or put a piece of paper on the spot, and hold a warm iron over it and rub with an oiled cloth.

ELLA.—Tarragon is an aromatic herb, and in the same genus with the common wormwood, but differing from this and most other species in having undivided leaves. It is a native of Siberia, and is cultivated in European and American gardens; in the latter rather sparingly. The French, who call it *estragon*, use it to flavour vinegar, pickles, mustard, &c. Tarragon vinegar is made by simply infusing the leaves in strong vinegar.

W. R. K.—The Scotch method of washing woollen shawls is as follows: Scrape one pound of soap, and boil it down in sufficient water. When cooling beat it with the hand; it will be a sort of jelly. Add three table-spoonfuls of spirits of turpentine and one of spirits of hartshorn. Wash the article well in it, then rinse in cold water until all the soap is taken off, then in salt and water. Fold between two sheets; take care not to allow two folds of the article washed to lie together. Iron with a very cool iron. Shawls done up in this way are said to look like new. Only use the salt where there are delicate colours that may run.

FAIR GATHERER OF SMILES.

Her eyes are deep-blue of the tenderest hue,
And the shadows that in them lie
Are dainty shadows, like those on the meadows

Tossed from an April sky.
Young cavaliers dance in the light of her glance
Like butterflies, caught by her wiles;
But she counteth their worth by a toss of her curls,
Thou gatherer fair of smiles.

Bright maiden! I know, by the light on thy brow,
Roguish wisdom is there to espy
The false from the true; nay, the whole man's in view
Under that dark, arched eye.
And the heart that is brave in his wooing can have,
Though he travel for miles and miles,
No worthier spouse than she'll be in his house,
Thou gatherer fair of smiles.

J. B. C.

W. V. M.—The dyes in use came chiefly from plants. Sometimes the roots furnish the colouring matter, as do the stems, bark, flowers, and seeds. A few dyes, such as cochineal and lac, come from animals, and many substances used in dyeing are obtained from the metals and other minerals. From the coal-tar of gas-works beautiful colours are made. They are generally called aniline colours. Among them are the magenta, solferino, roseine, mauve, aniline, emeraldine, blue de Paris, and Bismarck. Among the most important vegetable dyes are Brazil wood, logwood, madder, safflower, fustic, annatto, tumeric, indigo, sumac, alder, and red sandal, or sandalwood.

ALBA.—The leek is a biennial bulbous plant, growing wild in Switzerland, and cultivated in the gardens of Europe and this country for culinary purposes. All parts of it have an offensive, pungent odour, and an acid taste, dependent on an essential oil, which is in a great measure dissipated by decoction, and may be obtained separate by distillation. The bulb, which is the medicinal portion, consists of concentric layers, like the onion, which is resembles in medicinal properties, though somewhat milder. It is gently stimulant, with a peculiar direction to the kidneys. The expressed juice may be given in the dose of a fluid drachm, mixed with sirup. Like the leek, the marigold, a well-known garden plant, is at present very seldom, if ever, used in regular practice.

Mrs. R.—To dry-salt and pickle meat, it is best prepared by well-rubbing the meat with a mixture of salt, two pounds; saltpetre, two ounces; and moist sugar, one and a half ounces, until every crevice is thoroughly penetrated; after which it should be set aside until the next day, when it should be covered with fresh salt in such parts as require it. It may then be advantageously placed in any proper vessel, and subjected to pressure, adding a little fresh salt as necessary, and turning it daily until sufficiently cured. When the brine as it forms is allowed to drain from the meat, the process is called dry-salting; but when, on the contrary, it is allowed to remain on it, the article is said to be wet-salted. On the small scale, the latter is most conveniently performed by rubbing the meat with salt, &c., as stated, and after it has lain for a few hours, putting it into a pickle formed by dissolving four pounds of salt, one pound of sugar, and two ounces of saltpetre in two gallons of water. Should the pickling liquor get weak, boil it down a little and skim it, and add some more of the dry ingredients.

LOUISE.—The beautiful look of hair enclosed in your letter is of a rich golden-brown.

C. H.—Elle Ball is a pseudonym of Emily Brontë, sister of Anne and Charlotte Brontë, and author of "Wuthering Heights."

E. C. S.—1. "Ouida" is the *nom de plume* of Louisa de la Rance (Mrs. Montgomery Attwood). 2 and 3. Critics differ upon the subject.

L. O.—Meat is given a red colour and fine flavour by mixing brown sugar and salt, each two pounds; saltpetre, eight ounces; water, two gallons.

SAINTS.—The operas "Rigoletto," "Trovatore," "Traviata," and "Ernani" were composed by Giuseppe Verdi, a noted Italian musician, born 1814, and still living.

F. R. R.—It would be advisable to consult some first-class medical practitioner, and not depend upon any advertised nostrums. A physical trouble of the kind described by you calls for immediate treatment by a skilful physician.

ETHEL.—Ordinary pomatum is made as follows: Take of fat one pound; melt it at the lowest degree of heat that will effect the object; add oil of bergamot and lemon, of each one drachm. Stir the mixture until it begins to congeal, and then pour it into the pots.

REX.—1. Not unless it is specially willed to him. 2. If no support has been claimed, and none given, it can be affiliated at any time up to the age of sixteen. 3. It depends upon its length. 4. Wills Registry Office, Somerset House. 5. Good writing, but esoteric in style.

D. E. W.—Mizpah is a Hebrew word, meaning literally a beacon or watchtower. Its signification will be found in Genesis, chapter xxxi., verse 49, where it is stated that Laban and Jacob set up a heap of stones as a witness to a covenant between them, and Laban called it "Mizpah, for he said, the Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another." The word is sometimes inscribed on engagement rings.

JESSICA.—A very fine and fragrant cold cream is made as follows: Take half a pound of new lard, four ounces of almond oil, and four ounces spermaceti well pounded. Put these together into an earthen pipkin over a slow fire, and when completely melted stir in gradually half an ounce each of rose, cinnamon, and orange flower distilled waters. When nearly cold, add two drachms of essence of bergamot.

FANNIE.—Externally the solution of borax is used as a wash in scaly eruptions. A solution, formed by dissolving a drachm of the salt in two fluid ounces of distilled vinegar, has been found an excellent lotion for ringworm of the scalp. Borax is very much used as a detergent in ulcerous affections of the mouth in children. When employed for this purpose, it is generally applied in powder, either mixed with sugar in the proportion of one part to seven, or rubbed up with honey.

E. M. C.—A mixture for cleansing furniture is thus made: Cold-drawn linseed oil, one quart; spirits of wine and vinegar, half a pint each; butter (ter-chloride) of antimony, two ounces; spirits of turpentine, half a pint. Mix and shake well before using it. Apply it to the surface of the furniture by pouring a little on the rubber. Several applications will be necessary for comparatively new furniture, or for articles previously French polished or rubbed with beeswax.

N. Y. S.—Vanilla is employed more as a perfume and to flavour certain articles than as a medicine, though it has been recommended as a remedy in hysteria and low fevers, in the form of an infusion made in the proportion of about half an ounce to a pint of boiling water, and given in tablespoonful doses. The plant is a native of the West Indies, Mexico, and South America. According to one authority, vanilla does not yield volatile oil when distilled with water; and the aroma appears to depend on chemical changes which take place during and after the curing of the pods, which are collected before they are quite ripe, dried in the shade, covered with a coating of fixed oil, and then tied in bundles, which are surrounded with sheet lead, or inclosed in small metallic boxes, and sent into market. They are picked early because when fully ripe they split in two. The word vanilla is Spanish and means a little sheath, and the vanilla is so called on account of its pods looking like little knive sheaths.

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